

Our Weekly Serial Story Installment

CRUCIBLE

By
BEN AMES WILLIAMS

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SYNOPSIS

Barbara Sentry, seeking to sober up her escort, Johnnie Boyd, on the way home from a party, slaps him, and attracts the attention of a policeman, whom the boy knocks down. As he arrests him, Professor Brace of Harvard comes to the rescue and drives Barbara home. On the way they see Barbara's father driving from the direction of his office at 12-45, but when he gets home he tells his wife it is 11-15 and that he's been playing bridge at the club. Next day Sentry reports his office has been robbed and a Miss Wines, former temporary employee, killed. The evening papers luridly confirm the story, and Sentry takes it hard. Mary, elder daughter, in love with Neil Ray, young interne at the hospital where she works, goes off to dinner at Gus Loran's, Sentry's partner, with Mrs. Loran's brother, Jimmy Endie. Mr. and Mrs. Sentry call on old Mrs. Sentry, and Barbara, alone, receives Dan Fisher, reporter, who advises her not to talk. Phil Sentry, son at Yale, is disturbed at the possible implications and suspicion of Miss Wines' absence from her rooms for three days during August. He goes home to help. Sentry is arrested and booked for murder. Dan Fisher explains the evidence against him—that the robbery was a fake, the safe opened by one who knew the combination, changed since Miss Wines' employment there—that a back door key, a duplicate of Sentry's, was found in the girl's purse, and that Sentry, too, had been away those three days in August. Brace calls, and backs up Barbara in her denial that Sentry could have done it, because of the discrepancy of time between the slaying and their seeing Sentry on the road. Phil, showing the police over the house, finds his strong box forced open and his gun, which only his father knew of, gone. Meanwhile, the police find the stolen money burned in the furnace. Mrs. Sentry sees her husband, who swears his innocence, and tells her he had known of the robbery and murder the night before, but failed to call the police, and came home at 12-30. Phil and his mother are doubtful of Sentry's innocence, but keep silent.

CHAPTER V —11—

While they were at lunch, a little later, Dean Hare telephoned to say that Inspector Irons had decided to postpone his interrogations, so for the afternoon they were free. Mary was to see Neil Ray when he went off duty; and as they finished lunch, Linda came to propose that Phil go for a drive with her.

"I have to go out to those mills in Norwood to get some homespun," she explained, "and I hate to go alone."

Phil looked to his mother for consent. "Go along," she said. "Barbara and grandmother will be here." So Phil went, and found a measure of peace and forgetfulness in being thus with Linda. But when she brought him home, in late afternoon, he was reluctant to face them all; instead of going directly indoors, he walked around the house. He heard voices by the muddy stream beyond the pergola and went to look down over the bank. Policemen were there in boats with things like hinged rakes, dragging up debris from the bottom of the stream. One of them saw him and spoke quietly to the others, and they all looked up, silently. Phil went back toward the house, trembling.

He found his mother alone. "Mary's dining with Neil," she explained, "and I sent Barbara in to stay overnight with grandmother. Professor Brace called, drove them in." She smiled reassuringly. "So we'll have dinner together, you and I."

"Professor Brace?" he echoed. He remembered warily that the District Attorney had questioned Professor Brace, but he did not say so. "Funny for him to—hang around."

"I suppose he's naturally interested. The scientific mind, you know." Her tone was edged. "We're under his microscope, like insects."

"He introduced himself to the reporters," Phil recalled. "Almost as if he—wanted publicity."

"I see you don't like him either."

"Oh—I like him all right."

Dinner was served and they went in; and since they might here be overheard they spoke of other things. Phil talked at random, steadily, fighting down his thoughts: that his father had tried to burn money in the furnace, that his father was a murderer! He must not let his mother guess his dreadful certainty.

And she, as intent to hide her thoughts from Phil as he was to conceal his from her, helped him keep talk alive; but when they left the table and went into the living-room and were alone, silence crushed them; and Phil noisily lighted a fire, and Mrs. Sentry telephoned old Mrs. Sentry's apartment to say good night to Barbara. She reported to Phil, when she left the phone, that Professor Brace had stayed to dinner with them.

"I suppose he's taking notes," she reflected. "Like that German tutor at the foot of the table in 'War and Peace.' Remember? There's just a paragraph about him, but he's perfectly clear out, a complete character in your mind afterward."

Phil did not remember. "But speaking of Russians," he suggested, "how about some Russian Bank?" So they played till Mrs. Sentry said at last that they might as well go to bed. The house seemed very big and empty when they went upstairs, and parted for the night.

Later, Mrs. Sentry, still awake, heard Mary come in; but the girl did not come upstairs, so her mother went down, a dressing-gown over her night garments. She found Mary in the living-room, standing by the hearth, her lips bitten red, her hands twisting.

And Mrs. Sentry tried in an awkward way—they were not a demonstrative family—to take the girl in her arms, but Mary said, "Don't, please!"

So Mrs. Sentry sat down. "Shall we talk for a while?" she suggested. "Or are you sleepy?"

"Sleepy!" The word was fierce with scorn.

"How is Neil?"

"Very sensible!"

Mrs. Sentry said, "I knew he would—help you."

"Oh—help? Of course!"

"He didn't, then?"

Mary said: "Don't worry about Neil! We were practically engaged, but I told him tonight we must forget that. That after all this, I was hopelessly disqualified to be a missionary's wife, even in China!"

Mrs. Sentry waited. Mary said in a flat voice, passionless as ashes, "He agreed with me."

After a while her mother spoke, tentatively. "I wish I could—hold you in my lap, dear, as I did when you were little and were hurt."

"No, thanks. I'm not little any more." The girl stood before the hearth, rigid and still, her eyes fixed, her hands clasped behind her. Mrs. Sentry thought of a martyr at the stake surrounded by flames, burned without being consumed. She began to talk, of casual, healing things.

"Some people called this afternoon," she said. "Mrs. Harry Murr, bulging with questions she wanted to ask and didn't quite dare. And Mrs. Furness brought Miss Glen. You could see her memorizing every stick of furniture, every picture on the walls, to use in her next novel—"

The girl cried: "Mother, don't! How can you stand it?"

"And that young professor, Mr. Brace, dropped in." Mrs. Sentry persisted. "He took mother and Barbara to town."

"You're driving me crazy!"

Mrs. Sentry sighed wearily, surrendering. "I'm sorry about Neil, Mary. Yet—if he couldn't—stand the gaff, isn't it a good thing to know?"

"No it isn't!" Mary cried. "What does that matter, if you love a man? What does it matter if he's weak, a sniveling coward, a drunkard, a thief?" Her eyes widened. "Even a murderer," she whispered. "You go on loving him just the same."

And she cried: "Oh, why is love so deep a part of women, mother? Why can't we be reasonable, sensible!" She spat the word. "Like men!" And suddenly, seeing the older woman's face, she stopped, said then curtly: "Good night! I'm going

to bed." The still room ached when she was gone.

When Mrs. Sentry came downstairs in the morning, Mary had departed, leaving no message; and the older woman felt a deep concern that was half despair.

But she hid it from Phil. They stayed at home, together and yet each one alone. Phil wondered whether his mother knew that the Grand Jury might act today; he thought of a group of strange men, in a secret room somewhere, hearing evidence against his father, and trembled as though he were ill. He thought his mother might suggest



"Good Night! I'm Going to Bed."

that they go again to see his father, and knew that he himself had no strength to face the older man and to pretend he did not know what he did know. But his mother did not make the suggestion; and after lunch they drove in to see old Mrs. Sentry, and heard newsboys shouting the name of Sentry, and Mrs. Sentry shivered at last and said with a weary smile:

"I think we'd better stay at home hereafter, Phil."

On the homeward way—Barbara returned with them—they heard newsboys calling late editions, and one bawling youngster jumped on the running-board when they stopped for a traffic light to thrust a paper before their eyes. A headline, inches high, "Sentry Indicted." Mrs. Sentry closed her eyes, and the light changed, and the car leaped ahead.

At home a knot of people scattered from the entrance to the drive, gaped at them as they drove in. Phil saw that one woman had broken off a branch of rhododendron, and he thought bitterly: For a souvenir!

Indoors, Barbara asked in a shaken whisper, "Mother, what does 'indicted' mean?"

Mrs. Sentry said, "Hush, darling!" And she asked, "Do you know where Mary is, whether she'll be home to dinner?" She felt cold as iron. Barbara shook her head.

"I think Mary's rotten!" Phil said angrily. "We've got to—stick together!"

"She's pretty unhappy, Phil."

Mrs. Sentry explained. "Neil Ray broke their engagement."

"Engagement? I didn't know they were engaged."

"They would have been, in time. Mary loved him."

"I'd like to knock his block off!" Mrs. Sentry said. "Don't be a child, Phil. I'm afraid you'll find a good many people take the same attitude. Now get ready for dinner, both of you."

She thought at dinner, while Phil and Barbara talked to her, bravely

cheerful, that the world of which they were a part must be just now full of buzzing tongues. Her own tongue had never been under a curb. From the security of an assured position she had spoken as she chose, rigorous toward those who transgressed her code. Now others would have their turn. She tried to imagine what people would say, what their attitude would be. Would they speak to her of Arthur? Protesting they believed him innocent, professing friendship and sympathy while they watched her with sly, avidly curious eyes? She shuddered, and she thought: I might take the children abroad, live the rest of our lives abroad, perhaps assume another name. But someone who knew them would find them out; there would be whispering, whispering...

She tried to tell herself: He did not do it! Of course, he had lied to her about the time, that night, knowing she was too sleepy to recognize

covery and craven flight. But was better than that shame thought that if he did not, they might find some woman—woman—to swear that he had with her during the hours the murder occurred. That at least would be robust, manly, not weakly cowardly...

But of course anything true or false that could be credible, was better than to be convicted of murder. If that pined, she could never lift her again. The pride she lived by worth fighting for. Even with Linda came in as they ate dinner, and Mrs. Sentry went her, and proposed a rubber bridge. She clung to Linda's loyalty. Linda agreed; but Barbara would not.

"I'm sorry," she said, trying to smile. "I'm afraid this evening for—letting go." They were tremulously brave. "I don't mind, I think I'll slip myself and cry for a while."

She darted away. Phil followed her, but Linda said, "No, Phil. Let her go!" They heard Barbara's door upstairs. Mrs. Sentry rose and went into the living-room, ran somehow, and a little after a car grated on the drive.

It was Mary. She came out laying aside her hat. Mary realized that the car had gone away, and she was the fear of what Mary would say. Mary was flushed. Mrs. Sentry incredulously, that she had drinking. When Mary spat, tones were louder than usual defiant.

She said to Linda, curiously, "a family council, Linda." She carelessly, "Oh, stay if you course."

Phil protested: "Hey, Mary, talk like that! What's the with you?" He exclaimed, "drunk!"

She laughed derisively. "Not it's not for lack of trying," she asked Linda: "Could ashore that's going ashore ship's sinking!"

Linda said quietly: "No, I'll stay."

Mrs. Sentry felt desperate. She must speak, must do some. Her heart was full of a great passion; but old habit of caution bound her tongue. "You're not yourself!" she said.

"Myself?" Mary laughed shrill way. "Myself? Who are you? Who are you? And she said furiously: "I thought I knew! I thought we so secure, and settled, and and good." Her laughter rang deningling. "Decent? Good? cent, good people will ever us now."

"Mary!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Sensitive Springs Spun From Quartz; Tiny Threads Give Precise Measurements

Quartz, which looks like glass and is a sort of glass, is the last material most of us would use to make a spring. But the scientists in the General Research laboratories find nothing but quartz will do for springs in making precise measurements, says a writer in the New York Times.

Steel springs rust; quartz springs don't. Steel springs are affected by changes in humidity; quartz springs are not. Steel springs begin to lose their temper at about 250 degrees Centigrade (482 degrees Fahrenheit); quartz springs never lose their temper except at temperatures not attained in ordinary practice.

A quartz spring has a sensitivity of one milligram. In other words, it can detect a difference of weight as little as one 28,350th of an ounce. And it always snaps back, after stretching, to exactly the original point of rest.

Suppose it becomes necessary to measure the amount of moisture absorbed by cotton or cellulose. The cotton is suspended at one end of the spring and the weight of the sample determined by the stretch of the spring. By introducing more and more water at varying pressures it becomes possible to deter-

mine just how much moisture it can absorb.

Making a quartz thread is a thing of a fine art. The first step is to spin a fine thread no more than six one-thousandths of an inch in diameter. This is done by heated fused quartz rod to more than 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit and pull threads from the rod. The threads are measured by calipers. All in a quarter of a mill of the six-mil size are saved. (A mil is a unit used to measure the diameter of a wire. It is equivalent to one-thousandth of an inch.)

The final step is to place the thread in a long brass trough which leads to a mandrel (technical term for a drum of the right diameter). As it passes over the mandrel, the thread is heated to 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit. The mandrel makes two revolutions a minute. After cooling, the coils are ready for use.

Diver Heavily Laden

When dressed and ready to descend an ordinary diver carries from 180 to 200 pounds. Though depth of about 300 feet has been reached, the general maximum depth at which a diver can work is 150 feet and for short periods