

OUR WEEKLY SERIAL STORY INSTALLMENT

CRUCIBLE By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

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CHAPTER VII—Continued

Professor Brace continued his testimony under the questioning of Mr. Flood:

"What time was it when you came out of the tunnel?"

"Quarter past twelve."

"And what happened then?"

"A car passed us, then slowed down."

"Did you observe the number?"

"Yes, Miss Sentry said—"

"Never mind what she said. What was the number?"

Mrs. Sentry thought: They take so long to say such a simple thing. Why doesn't he just say, "I saw Mr. Sentry leave his office and drive home?"

But question and answer went maddeningly on.

"What did you do?"

"Followed the car to the Sentry home."

"Where did you last see it?"

"It turned into the Sentry drive."

"What did you do?"

"Miss Sentry and I stayed in my car, in front of the house."

"Hear anything?"

"Steps on the gravel from the garage toward the house."

"See anything?"

"I saw the light from the hall as the door opened."

"Anything else?"

"After about five minutes an upstairs light was turned on. About ten minutes later it was turned off again."

"What then?"

"Miss Sentry went into the house."

"At what time?"

"One o'clock, or a little before."

"Have you since seen that car?"

"Yes."

"With that number?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In the Sentry garage."

"Did you at any time that night see who was in the car?"

"Yes, a man."

"Did you know him?"

"No, not then."

"Did you see his face?"

"Yes, when he first passed us. I had to put on the brakes to avoid hitting him, and a street lamp was shining on his face."

"Do you now know who he was?"

"He was Mr. Sentry."

Mr. Flood turned to Mr. Falkran. "Your witness, sir," he said.

Mrs. Sentry looked breathlessly at Mr. Falkran, fearing on the one hand that he would allow this deadly evidence to go unchallenged; on the other that his questions would involve Barbara. Yet even at that cost he must do something. For here was the peg upon which the State's whole case must hang.

But Falkran said, "No questions!"

And instantly, like a clap of doom: "The State rests," said Mr. Flood.

During the brief recess, Mrs. Sentry, too shaken to move, stayed in her seat. She was not suffering; but she was so tired! Professor Brace had left the court room without having looked toward them, and she whispered to her son:

"Go catch him, Phil. Tell him we know he had to do it. Tell him we understand, that we don't blame him!"

Phil nodded, hurried out. Then Falkran came to her, and behind the mask of a smile which he wore for the world to see, he said, "Mrs. Sentry, I expect you were surprised I did not cross-examine; but the hour is late, and I wish to call one witness before adjournment today, so that I can leave the jury with something to think about tonight."

She said in low tone: "I see. But isn't that the key of the State's whole case? Proving he was down there that night?"

He said reassuringly: "Be easy. Trust me. We will give them a better key."

And a moment later they rose while the Court and jury resumed

their places; and then Mr. Falkran, briefly, made his opening. Circumstantial evidence, he said in calm, assured tones, was only to be trusted when the evidence in question was capable of but one explanation, of but one interpretation. The evidence submitted by the State was elaborate, detailed, well presented, well selected.

"But you will see," he said, "how the truth which we propose to reveal to you fits into this pattern without a misfit anywhere."

And he called the dead girl's father to the stand.

Falkran dealt with the old man

Falkran said to the Court: "I offer the letter." It was marked. He read it aloud, standing in front of the jury box, facing them.

The letter was for the most part without significance. The dead girl had written happily of her work, hoped that even though it was only temporary it might lead to something permanent. But one paragraph Mr. Falkran read slowly and impressively, in his fine trained tones, with a maximum effect, with his eyes upon the jury. He read:

"I don't like Mr. Sentry! He's cross if you make the least mistake. But Mr. Loran is nice, awfully jolly.



"And What Happened Then?" Asked Mr. Flood.

gently, winning his confidence with simple questions; but at length he led Mr. Wines to examine that collection of photographs which had previously been submitted to the New Jersey hotel clerk.

"I wish you would pick out all the photographs of your daughter which you find there," he directed.

The old man, after a little, selected two.

Falkran picked up from the clerk's desk those previously identified by the New Jersey hotel man as portraits of Miss Wines. "What about these?" he asked.

"They ain't her."

"Sure?"

"I'd ought to be, I sh'd think. Sure I'm sure."

"Not your daughter?"

"No."

Falkran smiled contentedly.

"Now, Mr. Wines," he asked, in a new tone, "did your daughter write to you from Boston?"

"Yes, certain!"

"How often?"

"Most generally every Sunday."

"Did she write you while she worked for the firm of Sentry and Loran?"

"Yes, she did."

"How often?"

"Once, anyway."

"Have you that letter?"

District Attorney Flood rose hurriedly, approached the bench. Falkran joined him there. They spoke in low tones. The old man on the stand took a letter from his pocket and held it in his hands, waiting. After a moment Falkran turned and took it from him and handed it to the Judge. The Judge read it, spoke to Flood. Falkran smiled and with the letter in his hand turned back to the witness.

"Who wrote this letter?" he asked.

"She did."

"Your daughter?"

"Yes."

He asked me to go to dinner with him tonight. He said there wasn't any harm in it, but of course I didn't go."

A stir ran through the court. Falkran waited a moment for silence, then finished reading the letter.

"Your witness," he told Flood.

The District Attorney declined to cross-examine. Falkran nodded, and he said: "It is near the hour, Your Honor. Mr. Sentry is to be our next witness. I suggest a recess till tomorrow morning."

Court adjourned.

CHAPTER VIII

Dan Fisher's assignment at the trial was not to cover the actual testimony—that was recorded by reporters working in relays, using those swift abbreviations meaningless to anyone but themselves which with a good newspaper man take the place of shorthand—but to write the morning paper story. Mr. Sentry was on the stand all Saturday forenoon; and Dan wrote for the Sunday paper:

Arthur Sentry, on trial for his life and charged with the murder of Agnes Wines, on the witness stand yesterday admitted that he fired the shot which killed Miss Wines.

He testified that the shot was fired by accident, in the dark, when he surprised an attempt to rob the safe in his office.

He admitted leaving the dead girl's body where it fell. He admitted taking the money from the safe and burning it in the furnace at home. He admitted throwing the death weapon into the river behind his garage where it was subsequently found by the police.

He denied any misconduct with Miss Wines. He testified that it was another woman who spent two nights with him in a New Jersey hotel last August.

Mr. Sentry's testimony created a sensation. The court officers had difficulty in keeping order until Judge Stanton warned the spectators that if there was further disturbance the court would be cleared.

Mr. Sentry's testimony follows. Questions by Mr. Falkran.

Describe Business.

Q. You are Arthur Sentry? A. I am.

Q. Of Sentry and Loran? A. Yes.

Q. Wholesale dealers in produce, fruit, vegetables? A. Yes.

Q. You have a partner? A. Yes, Mr. Loran.

Q. Is he in court? A. No.

Q. Have you seen him in court during this trial? A. On the first day, yes.

Q. Did you found the business? A. No, it was founded by my grandfather.

Q. And continued by whom? A. By my father, and then by me.

Q. Did you take Mr. Loran into partnership? A. Yes.

Q. Under what circumstances? A. We were friends, just out of college. We wished to be associated. His father bought him an interest in the business, at my suggestion.

Q. Are you friends still? A. Yes.

Q. Are your families intimate? A. Not particularly. We exchange dinners.

Q. Is your business a good one? A. Yes, of its kind.

Q. Are you athletic? A. I play golf.

Q. Ever box? A. No.

Q. Fish? A. A little.

Q. Hunt? A. No.

Q. Why not? A. Mrs. Sentry dislikes firearms.

Q. Do you? A. Not at all.

Q. Are you experienced with them? A. No.

Q. Ever fire a rifle? A. I had a twenty-two when I was a boy.

Q. Ever fire a rifle of larger caliber? A. No.

Q. Is your father living? A. He has been dead ten years.

Q. Did you ever have a revolver? A. No.

Q. Did you ever ask for such a revolver? A. No.

Q. Did you ever carry one? A. No.

Q. Bought ammunition for it? A. No.

Q. Where? A. At Forbush's goods store.

Q. You were a regular customer? A. Yes.

Q. They knew you? A. Yes.

Q. So that you made no secret purchase of ammunition, bought store where you were known? A. Yes.

Q. When did you start carrying a weapon? A. Last fall.

Q. Do you remember the day was the day after Mr. Miller was up, slugged, and robbed near the hospital? A. Yes.

Q. Had that incident anything to do with your carrying a revolver? A. No.

Q. What was the connection occasionally went to my office in the evening. The streets are often I wanted to protect myself.

Q. Did you carry this revolver in the dash locker in my car? A. No, it was too big.

Q. And you had no permit? A. No.

Q. Asked for none? A. No.

Q. Why not? A. I was nervous.

Q. Did you buy this revolver? A. Yes.

Q. Where did you get it? A. I had it, in a metal lock box in the box with a screwdriver.

Q. So you were nervous about and decided to carry a gun? A. Yes.

Q. Are you a nervous man? A. A lively imagination, a lot of fears.

Q. Do they affect your actions sometimes do shameful things, bad mistakes, through fear.

Tells of "Enid."

Q. Did your office take on last summer? A. Yes.

Q. Stenographers? A. Yes.

Q. Any stenographers with whom came in contact? A. Yes.

Q. How many? A. One.

Q. What was her name? A. Wines.

Q. A good stenographer? A. Yes.

Q. Pretty? A. Attractive, yes.

Q. Flirtatious? A. Not at all.

Q. Ever see her outside of office while she worked for you? A. No.

Q. Did you see her at all after she left? A. Yes.

Q. After she worked for you? A. Yes.

Q. How often? A. Twice.

Q. Did you go anywhere last summer? A. Yes.

Q. Where? A. I spent two weeks at a hotel in New Jersey.

Q. Under your own name? A. Yes.

Q. Alone? A. No.

Q. Who was with you? A. A woman.

Q. Who was she? A. I don't know her name.

Q. Know her name? A. She is first name was Enid.

There was laughter in the court. Stanton warned the spectators that there were further interruptions the room would be cleared.

Q. Was she Miss Wines? A. No.

Q. You met her where? A. In Boston-New York boat.

Q. On your way to New York? A. Yes.

Q. Why did she not stay in New Jersey with you? A. I was afraid we might someone who knew me.

Q. Who suggested your name? A. I did.

Q. Why New Jersey? A. Because home was in that state. I did not want to travel with her across a state.

Q. Did she resemble Miss Wines? A. No.

Q. About the same size and color? A. Yes.

Q. Rather. But she was older.

Q. Did she know your name? A. No.

Q. Did you arrange to meet her? A. No.

Q. Why not? A. I didn't want possible further contact between me and her.

Q. And did you ever on any occasion wrong Mrs. Sentry? A. No.

Q. With Miss Wines? A. No.

Q. Now Mr. Sentry, you said Miss Wines twice after she left the play of Sentry and Loran? A. Yes.

Q. Take the first occasion. Was you see her? A. In my office.

Q. At what time of day? A. Afternoon.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Piranha, Most Vicious Jungle Fish, Lurks in the Rivers of South America

Probably the worst enemy of any living thing (in the South American jungle) lurks in the river itself—the piranha. There are piranhas in almost every South American river and they are literally devils, writes Stuart Martin in Wide World, London. I have seen three varieties—the green-and-gold ones of Paraguay, the shiny gray specimens of the Amazon, and the green-and-black spotted demons of the Araguaya and Xingu. The natives eat them, but the quality of their flesh is nothing to brag about.

For a wounded ox or horse to fall into the river means certain death; it is also fatal for a human being to get among a shoal of piranhas, especially if there is any sore or wound on his body. Piranhas can scent their prey far away, and go literally mad at the taste of blood.

It is a sickening spectacle to see these fierce fish conducting a mass attack. The water around the unfortunate animal that falls into their clutch becomes a whirlpool, a maelstrom of death, boiling and foaming as the blood-crazed piranhas rush to the feast. They eat the flesh off

the living victim until they have the bones; soon nothing but skeleton remains. The Indians catch piranhas easily by baiting their hooks with a bit of meat or newly-dead fish. The creature is jerked about still snapping viciously. As an example of the ferocity of the piranha I may say that it is a custom to slice off the head of a sharp knife—and even when this is done the jaws continue to bite at you! These demons are between 18 inches and 2 feet length.

The Word Yard

The word yard comes to us from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning a rod. In ancient days London Answers Magazine said was regarded as equal to the circumference of the human arm. Then Henry I decreed that it should be the length of his arm. It is interesting when we recall that of us can measure off a yard string, etc., by stretching our nose to the extreme of our arm fully extended.