

IDLE ISLAND

By
ETHEL HUESTON

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WNU Service

STORY FROM THE START

On the verge of nervous collapse, due to overwork, Gay Deane, artist, seeks rest at Idle Island. She rents a cottage, the "Lone Pine," from an island character, the "Captain," and his sister, Alice Andover, "administrator." Gay finds the cottage is tenanted by an elderly lady, "Auntalmiry," who consents to move to another abode, the "Apple Tree." On an exploration of the island Gay is horrified by the appearance of the drifting body of a drowned man. A bullet wound in the temple shows the man to have been murdered. Gay returns with the "Captain," but they find no body there. Gay, being unable to convince her neighbors of the truth, draws a picture of the face of the dead man, intending to send it to the authorities. She meets a stranger, to whom she tells the story and shows the picture. He asks for it, but Gay refuses. Next day the picture is missing. "Rand," Wallace, wanderer, and considered something of a "black sheep" by the islanders, surprises Gay at household tasks. Gay's acquaintance with Rand ripens to affection. Gay determines to stay for the winter. The stranger whom Gay had met the day of her discovery of the body introduces himself as Ronald Ingram. "Auntalmiry" tells Gay of her son, "Buddy," who has been missing for years. Rand is suspicious of Ronald Ingram, and apprehensive of some evildoing in a house known as the "Little Club," apparently unoccupied "Auntalmiry" is planning her Christmas party.

CHAPTER VII—Continued

"I'm sorry he chose the Lone Pine for his hibernating this afternoon. He cheated me out of a pleasant hour. Does he think best in the top of your pine tree? I saw him perching there as if he were quite at home."

Gay laughed merrily. "No, indeed. He was putting up an aerial. He is building me a radio. No, he does not hibernate in my tree top, and I wish you had come in. You would quite like him."

"No, I shouldn't like him.—Not him, under any circumstances.—And I do not enjoy other people's cooking; it riles me."

"We don't cook. Fancy the state of Maine cooking."

Ronald Ingram reverted again moodily to talk of the land. He was not yet sure what he really wanted to do with it, he said, wondered if he would not be wise to sell it outright.

"I haven't money enough to finance things on a big scale. Of course if the boom ever comes—and it ought to boom—it seems the logical summer refrigerator for New York and Boston, yes, even for Washington. I have two companies figuring on it. What would you think of a Chinese group, imitation bamboo stuff, pagoda and all that? I know a Chinese artist from Boston. Moy Sen, his name is. He's been up a few times, making sketches for me. Clever chap he is, for a Chinik. He was here yesterday. He thinks we can swing it big."

Mercurially, Gay was fully in sympathy with him again. By his candor he had entirely stilled the suspicions that Rand had stirred to life. How frankly he spoke of the Chinese artist. How natural his explanation of the little foreigner's presence. In the face of his disarming, ingenuous outspokenness, his honest admission of his financial limitations, how very petty and narrow and mean appeared the cold suspicious nature of New England.

He said he was obliged to return to Portland on the early boat, and Gay went with him to the door.

"You are very game, I know, but do, please, be careful. Keep yourself locked in and everybody else locked out, won't you?"

The genuineness of his solicitude touched Gay. "I will be careful," she said. "I wish you were staying all winter. You are such a pleasant interlude."

"Interlude between Cavaliers," he said regretfully. "Still it is something to see you, to touch your hand. I am grateful for that. You are very—sweet. You will not forget me, will you?"

Half an hour later Rand came, and without waiting for a word from him Gay launched at once into a long and fervid defense of Ronald Ingram.

"You may be right about some things, but on Ronald Ingram you are totally wrong. He's really a nice fellow, and you will like him. Perhaps he'll let you be Chief High Priest of his Chinese pagoda."

Rand laughed at her.

The next day he went to the city to look up the records of real-estate transfers. He found that the entire property of the Little club had been bought outright, for cash, by Ronald Ingram of New York city, and that all publication of the transfer had been withheld from the press at his request, presumably for business reasons. But the date of this purchase was not within the past month, as he had explicitly stated to Gay, but nearly two years earlier, since which time the place had not been offered either for sale or rental, and all taxes had been promptly paid.

CHAPTER VIII

Rand kept a jealous watch over the Little club and over the bit of forest

land that served so effectually to conceal it from curious eyes. Every day with his gun he tramped the woods and shore, coming often upon the old house, as if by inadvertence, sometimes trying the doors tentatively, as did all casual strollers who passed that way. But in spite of his seeming nonchalance and the lazy admissiveness of his wanderings, he was always sharply alert for signs of life.

With powerful field-glasses he examined the cove from a distance, and watched every day for a cloud of smoke to tinge the blue above the woods. But all of his efforts were unavailing.

After the first few tingling, nerve-racked days, Gay's excitement flagged, her interest waned and all of her suspicions rested.

"Oh, it's just a bunch of rum runners, if it's anybody at all," she assured him, half jealous of his immersion in the mystery. "Pay attention

to me. It's none of our business.—Besides, maybe he's right, after all—Ronald Ingram. Perhaps the Chinik is just an artist from Boston."

But Rand would not be drawn from the pursuit. The mass of evidence was too convincing. And now that his suspicions were fully aroused, he marveled that he had never before realized how completely the Little club was adapted for secret criminal exploitation—as was the island itself in sanctity as it seemed.

The occupation of the summer colony continued but for a scant three months of the year, and with its going the entire northern peninsula was deserted. Except for the Lone Pine on the hilltop and the Apple Tree in the orchard below, there was no residence within a mile of the cove, which was admirably protected, shut in snugly by high cliffs to east and west, while directly before it lay the little rock-girt dome of Punkin knob. While the cove offered a perfect landing for small boats, it lay to the west of the course taken by ships going in and out of Portland harbor.

Examining those locked doors and windows afresh, with his suspicious aroused, Rand saw clearly that it was now far more securely shut in than it had been in former years of its desertion. Every crack and seam of the frames that covered windows and doors had been sealed from within. It was locked from chimney to solid rock foundation, as tight as a drum.

Often, in wandering about, both in the woods and near the club, Rand had a feeling that he was watched, but all his efforts to discover the secret source of this were unavailing. Gay admitted that she, too, felt watched sometimes. She said it was

with incredible rapidity. It is the swallow among insects, and so swift is its flight, and so keen its vision, that it will recognize, follow, and catch on the wing the tiniest prey.

It can fly backwards or forwards, and turn at a right angle at top speed. Like the swallow, too, its flight seems tireless, and it is seldom seen to alight.

Little Soil Not Tilled

In Guatemala and Salvador, the two most populous countries in Central America, the population is so dense that there is very little waste land. Guatemala has 2,000,000 people and Salvador with an area of only 7,225 square miles, 1,040,000 or 144 persons to the square mile. This is the densest population in the western hemisphere. These countries are rich in sugar, coffee, minerals, rice, hemp, cotton and bananas.

A Thought for Today

If a man be endowed with a generous mind this is the best kind of nobility.—Plato

Slap at Education

Education is really a very simple matter. A wise man once said that it consists of a log, with a teacher sitting on one end and a student on the other. Or it is a bowl of soup and a tattle and a hungry child asking for more. The rest is largely floundering, or the whistling of educators to keep up their course.—Don Rose in the Philadelphia Ledger.

Dragon-Fly a Marvel of the Insect World

The dragon fly is not one of those beings who have eyes and see not. When this insect looks at you he sees you well—71,000 of you.

This most wonderful organ of vision, though no larger than a pin's head, has facets upon the lens of the eye and these facets have been counted as high as 17,000, each one more perfect than any side of a diamond fashioned by the hand of man.

The dragon-fly usually is found near water, probably the stream whence it first emerged, says London Tit-Bits. Its wings, which are of the most exquisite and transparent gauze, move

with incredible rapidity. It is the swallow among insects, and so swift is its flight, and so keen its vision, that it will recognize, follow, and catch on the wing the tiniest prey.

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the troubled spirit of the body that had come to her in the cove.

And then, after three weeks of keeping a watch so strict that he would have sworn that nothing untoward could possibly have occurred in the island without his knowledge, it was not, after all, the result of his assiduous guard that brought result, but the idle curiosity of the Females Wallace, the thing that Rand particularly disliked and took pleasure to deery.

"Rand," began Miss Lida timidly, as they sat at supper, "you don't know who is moving off the island, do you?"

"No," he said briefly. "Is anybody?"

"Well, a big furniture van came by this afternoon. It went up toward the point. I walked up to the end of the lane, but it was out of sight, and I don't know if it went down the back shore or up to Colony corner. But it didn't come down."

Then for the first time Rand turned around with some interest. "It didn't come down," he repeated. "It must have come down. There's nobody on the Back Shore, nor up at the Colony either. It must have gone back to town on the last ferry."

"No, it didn't. Mary Malcolm was watching for it, to ask the driver."

"If I hear anything about it, I'll let you know," Rand said, with unusual kindness.

Quickly he excused himself from the table and went out. At the end of the lane he paused to consider. The Back Shore was a long open road, subject to traffic. If a strange motor van went that way, it had legitimate business there. But the Colony corner, although nearly half a mile from the Little club, which stood at the other end of the forest, was separated from it only by thick and impenetrable forest. It was not the nearest point from the club to the motor road, but it was by all odds the most desirable for one who desired secrecy.

Anyone, then, who wished to remove something from the Little club without attracting undue attention, would most certainly run a car to the end of the road at Colony corner, for the road ended there, and carry a secret burden through the dark and deserted woods to that point.

With this in mind, Rand turned up to the Colony corner on a dead run. Like every other islander, he carried in his pocket a small electric flash. But like no other islander, he carried also a revolver on his hip.

As he neared the end of the road, where it fell abruptly away to a steep decline of rocks, he skirted wider into the woods behind the Shingle shack, and drew up slowly to the fringe of the woods. It was very dark, but distinctly he could make out a huge bulky shadow against the trees that outlined the end of the road. It was the motor van, beyond all shadow of doubt. There was no light attached, no sound from within, no stir of life. Rand held his breath to listen, but it was silent as a tomb. Suspecting the presence of a guard, he dared not venture on examination, but as he knew the van could not possibly get off the island until the ferry at six twenty-five in the morning, he felt he had plenty of time.

Gingerly, then, he worked his way to the rear of the cottage, with which he was familiar, and let himself into a basement window and up through the cellar stairs to the front room. There with blankets from an adjoining bedroom, and pillows from the couch, he made himself comfortable on the floor beside the window—too comfortable, for he fell sound asleep.

Hours later he was awakened by the sudden sound of a motor, and cursing his negligence he sprang up. It was not yet full daylight, but the pale gray mist that creeps between day and night, holding a hand of each, lay over the island.

In the driver's seat of the van a man huddled in a great coat, his cap drawn low, his hands encased in shaggy gloves. The motor was cold, and he was obliged to press the starter again and again.

It was a long time before his efforts were rewarded by a cleared window, the usual small basement window, perhaps two feet long by eighteen inches high. The glass was covered on the inside with a thick black curtain, so that he gained no view of the interior, and the window itself he found, to his disappointment, not only locked, but sealed with a fine cement, or wax, along the four edges of it.

Convinced, however, that something of great value must be concealed there to necessitate these precautions, he resolved to gain admittance at all costs. With renewed eagerness he attacked the window with the stout knife which had served him well a hundred times in the emergencies of boating, fishing and hunting, and worked it slowly around the edges, pecking at the cement which bound it in place. And finally he felt it give, and drew it carefully out.

Cautionously he thrust his hand into the aperture, and drew aside the black curtain which veiled it. The room was in absolute darkness. He listened long, but could hear no slightest breath of sound in any portion of the house. Breathlessly, then, his revolver cocked alertly in his right hand, with the left he extended his pocket flash, pressed the button, and swept the yellow light into the room, moving it slowly about, inch by inch, from wall to wall. The silence was like the grave itself.

Rand felt the emptiness of the house, sensed it, and unwilling to lose an opportunity he might not have again, he determined to go in, although realizing fully the risk he ran.

To get in he was obliged to replace both his flash and his revolver in his pocket, and drop down, defenseless and in the dark, but this was a chance he felt he was obliged to take. And after that breathless moment of his descent, when he flashed his light into the room again. It seemed surprising by commonplace, just what one would expect to find the basement of an abandoned clubhouse.

When the engine ran smoothly at last, the driver backed it around carefully, for the road was narrow and the rocky cliff rugged and precipitous, with trees jutting close. As it turned Rand saw the license plates, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, in conformity with the law which requires interstate vehicles to bear the license of each, and Rand had time to jot down the New Hampshire number before the car was finally backed away from him.

Rand looked at his watch. It was a quarter past six. The first ferry went over at six twenty-five.

"Well planned for a getaway," he thought, approvingly. "No time for Mary Malcolm to ask them any questions."

The guard stepped briskly down from the rocks and threw open the big doors in the rear of the van. A sudden jerk of his head toward the wood was evidently a signal, for on the instant appeared a line of men, small, stooped and shuffling, who came in a sort of loping run down the narrow path from the woods, single file, their soft feet making no sound at all, either on the rocks or among the dry dead needles of the pines. The guard at the back of the car gave each a hand in turn, and swung them up, deftly, into the van, one after another.

And as they turned about, facing him, to make the lithe spring into the car, Rand saw their faces. They were Chinese, every one, twenty-five of them by count. The guard hastily closed the door, snapping a lock upon it, and sprang up beside the driver, and almost before he was in his seat the car was rolling swiftly away down the cinder road.

For one moment Rand was irresolute. He could telephone to the police on the mainland, and a detail of them would meet the ferry at the pier and take the truck with its foreign freight into custody. But on afterthought, it seemed that the capture of these twenty-five little old Chinese men meant nothing. It was the ring that counted, the band that had grouped itself together to mock at the law. Making his decision quickly, he hurriedly got out of the cottage and ran through the woods toward the Little club.

Hastily selecting the trail in the rocks where the descent was least difficult, a trail held in his memory from boyhood adventures years before, Rand dropped swiftly down, from crag to crag, until he stood in the cove. The one great door beneath the piazza was securely locked, every seam and crack impenetrably sealed.

Reluctantly he abandoned hope of admission from below and made his way up the cliffs once more. Rand knew the construction of the building perfectly, having assisted indeed in its erection. In the beginning there had been no bank of loose rocks beneath the piazza other than that afforded by nature, and there was a window to the basement on the eastern side, opening just above ground. Later on, for the sake of warmth, small rocks had been thrown under, and although Rand felt some distaste for the task, he felt sure that by pulling out the rocks, he could get at the window beneath the piazza floor, and thus into the basement. It was unlikely that the small basement window would be subjected to such rigid sealing, sheltered as it was behind six feet of piazza floor well walled with rocks.

In spite of his profession of indolence, Rand was not averse to labor when the end justified the effort, so he felt sturdily to work at a distance which he judged, and correctly as events proved, would lead to the basement window.

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To get in he was obliged to replace both his flash and his revolver in his pocket, and drop down, defenseless and in the dark, but this was a chance he felt he was obliged to take. And after that breathless moment of his descent, when he flashed his light into the room again. It seemed surprising by commonplace, just what one would expect to find the basement of an abandoned clubhouse.

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DAIRY FACTS

KEEP ALL MILK UTENSILS CLEAN

While no one food is used more universally than milk, it is one of the most easily contaminated by its surroundings, according to Dr. W. G. Sackett, bacteriologist of the Colorado experiment station, who spoke to the dairy and creamery fieldmen on the harmful effects of bacteria in milk and cream.

In an explanation of how dirt gets into milk, Doctor Sackett stated that even milk coming directly from the udder of the cow is not sterile. Quality and length of time milk will remain sweet depends upon the bacterial count which can be kept down by sanitary conditions and cleanliness. Milk is contaminated with bacteria from dirt, hair, straw or manure falling into the milk from the cow's body or from dust settling into the milk pail. This can be lessened by currying cows to remove loose hair, wiping flanks and udder with damp cloth, the use of pails with smaller openings, and care not to feed cows and stir up dust in the barn just previous to milking.

Cement floors and frequent cleaning of stables are also advocated.

The milker himself may increase the bacterial contamination of milk through lack of personal cleanliness. Doctor Sackett pointed out. He should wear clean clothing, should himself be free from disease and in perfect condition of health.

One of the greatest sources of contamination in milk is dirty utensils. The cracks become full of dirt and filth which can be removed only by scalding with live steam or scalding hot water. Doctor Sackett showed where the bacterial count of milk in a test was increased from 5,000 per c. c. to 350,000 per c. c. merely through dirty pails, strainers, clarifier tank, clarifier, cooler and filter tanks.

Strainers do not take out bacteria, but merely allow them to wash off from the strained dirt into the milk. Aeration does not lower the bacterial count except through effect of cooling. It does remove odors and "barny" flavors, Doctor Sackett explained. Milk kept at a temperature below 50 degrees Fahrenheit will remain sweet longer than at a high temperature.

Doctor Sackett pointed out the dangers from disease like tuberculosis, septic sore throat, diphtheria, typhoid fever, etc., through milk produced under unsanitary conditions. Pasteurization will kill disease-producing bacteria and is being demanded more and more. Prevention of unsanitary conditions through cleanliness with milk products is very desirable.

Some Good Grain Rations

With Alfalfa and Silage

Some excellent rations that fit in well in a district of Wisconsin where 90 per cent of the farmers are feeding alfalfa hay are presented here-with:

With good silage—14.8 per cent protein ration composed of 700 pounds ground oats, 500 pounds corn or barley, 300 pounds of bran, 200 pounds of oil meal and 200 pounds of gluten feed.