

MURDER AT MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

It was what Donaghy's words brought to Harper's ear, but it was as if Donaghy's real voice had been saying, "I know this man. That knowledge is dangerous to one of you. Will it be made worth while for me to forget?"

Chapter 15 INQUISITION

A FEW minutes later Mrs. Dufresne's sister arrived, with her husband, Richard Croymen. One had only to glance at Aline Croymen to recognize her as the sister of Sylvia Dufresne. Her hair approached an auburn shade rather than the golden blonde coloring of her sister.

Her features, too, though of the same distinctive beauty, had less of the fragile and ethereal quality. Her natural manner was more vigorous and forthright, though not lacking either in poise or graciousness.

Mrs. Croymen excused herself at the first opportunity to go upstairs and see if she could be of any service. Harper continued to talk with Richard Croymen. He found this brother-in-law of Pierre Dufresne a nervous, impulsive personality, but with an alert, incisive turn of mind.

He questioned the detective closely along lines which showed that he had a keen grasp of the essentials of the mystery and a bond of mutual liking and respect sprang up between him and the Sergeant of Detectives at their first contact.

It was not until later that the detective found out that Croymen was the famous concert pianist.

Croymen was not the only one who exhibited a strong interest in the strange mystery of the breakfast-room. The chauffeur, Donaghy, listened intently and said nothing. And Harper was surprised to glance upward and find Dr. Ulrich standing near the head of the stairs, absorbed in the conversations below. He caught the detective's look and slowly backed away, with a sardonic gleam of the eye.

When Mrs. Croymen returned from upstairs, Harper mustered them all into the breakfast-room. They formed into two natural groups, facing the body in the chair. In one group were Pierre Dufresne, and Mr. and Mrs. Croymen. In the other were the two Whitmores, Andrews, and Donaghy.

The detective gave a brief summary of the situation, to which they listened in absolute silence. He demonstrated how the features had been altered by the disguise.

"Have any of you ever seen this man before?"

Pierre Dufresne looked on in stony silence.

"I have you, Mrs. Croymen?"

"I am sure I have not," she answered in a very small voice.

"Mr. Croymen?"

"No, Sergeant. Sorry I can't help you."

"Whitmore?"

The black-browed Mrs. Whitmore spoke up before her slow-minded spouse could pull his wife together.

"No, we've never seen him," she answered, sharply.

"Perhaps your husband would prefer to answer for himself," Harper suggested, annoyed by her air.

"Well, I ought to know. We've been married twenty-some years, and if I didn't see him, John didn't see him," she shot back, her black eyes snapping.

"That's right, I don't know him," the slow-voiced John Whitmore replied, with a sheepish look.

And more than one pair of ears was aware of the importance of both messages!

The following day, Wednesday, January 11th, dawned clear and cold. The heavy fall of snow had tapered off about midnight and there had been very little wind to disturb it afterward.

Harper, arriving for duty at Dufresne's house shortly after eight o'clock, noted with satisfaction the undisturbed condition of the white blanket surrounding the house. A caprice of Nature had contrived this smooth carpet to record a portion of the previous night's fantastic story and the detective proposed to make good use of it.

Harper found Mrs. Richard Croymen in the hall, deep in consultation with the black-browed housekeeper, Mrs. Martha Whitmore. Despite the late hour at which she had retired, Aline Croymen was serene and clear-eyed, and without a trace of fatigue.

"Good morning, Mrs. Croymen," Harper greeted her, and nodded pleasantly to the housekeeper.

Mrs. Whitmore returned a grudging nod and retreated to her domain in the rear of the house. "Good morning, Mr. Harper," Aline responded with a cordial smile. "Or should I say 'Sergeant Harper'?"

"Not unless you prefer it. There is a theory that the best way to address a Sergeant of Police is to call him 'Captain,'" he bantered, meeting her pleasant mood.

"That's a clever idea. I shall call you Mr. Harper and reserve the 'Captain' in case I should need it later," she said, teasingly. "You know, I have been quite surprised at your assistants. I had the idea that detectives were heavy-set men with clipped moustaches, that they always chewed on unlighted cigars and wore derby hats which they never removed, except possibly to sleep. Or do detectives ever sleep?"

"Sometimes for weeks at a stretch," Harper assured her with mock solemnity. "But when a big case comes along we have to get our sleep when, and if, we can find it."

Mrs. Croymen dropped her tone of light raillery. "But I am keeping you from your work. I fear the others will not be down for some time yet. It was so late when we retired. My sister asked me to take charge of the household arrangements until she is able to be around again."

"She asked you?" Harper caught her up quickly. "Dr. Ulrich told me that Mrs. Dufresne was not to talk for several days."

Aline nodded. "Of course, Mr. Harper. I used 'talk' in a figurative sense. My sister has already arranged a system of communication. Whenever she has a question or a message she writes it down on a pad. It works out quite easily."

"By the way, how is Mrs. Dufresne this morning?"

"Poor girl, she's naturally greatly worried over the possibility of a scar, and then these tragic happenings are keeping her on edge."

Sergeant Harper and Mrs. Croymen entered the breakfast-room. Although the victims had long since been removed, the room retained a tragic and depressing aura that not even the bright morning light could dissipate.

There were those dark stains on the rug, for instance, and the unknown dead man's clothing piled on a chair, complete from the shoes to the beribboned nose-glasses. But the most characteristic seal of the police visitation were the numerous patches of dusting powders that had been sprayed here and there in the search for fingerprints.

"You certainly leave nothing to chance," Mrs. Croymen observed. "This morning I saw there was a policeman guarding Mr. Dufresne's room. Isn't that a rather unusual procedure, Mr. Harper? Surely, last night's events put an end to the danger?"

The detective shook his head. "This is an unusual case, Mrs. Croymen. We do not actually know that the man found in this room is the man who threatened Mr. Dufresne and attempted to kill him."

"But surely you have a theory?" thought the matter was quite clear. (Copyright 1934, by Walter C. Brown.)

Tomorrow, Harper plunges into the maze on which Japanese reports said one Manchukuoan sailor was killed and another wounded May 12.

The Soviet government's official version of the border incident was given in a dispatch from Khabarovsk, Siberia.

BOND HOLDERS TO GAIN CASH MUST ACT IMMEDIATELY

Officials of Medford Irrigation district are jubilant over the success of the refinancing of the district. Glen Arnapiger, secretary and manager of the district, reports that the new municipal bankruptcy bill, the passage of which by the present congress is now assured, provides that when a settlement is approved by 75 per cent in amount of the bondholders it becomes binding on all. The district already has the signed approval of the holders of more than 75 per cent of the bonds and it only remains to carry out the details to complete the settlement.

The settlement provides for the payment of 40 per cent of the face of the old bonds. Reconstruction Finance corporation has agreed to lend the district sufficient to pay this amount in cash to all bondholders who sign the proposed settlement. All others will receive their 40 per cent in the new 30-year bonds bearing 4 per cent interest. It is believed that most of the bondholders will prefer cash to the new four per cent bonds of the district, but those who want the bonds may have them.

To secure the cash settlement it is necessary for the bondholders to sign the settlement agreement as once, but those who prefer their 40 per cent in the bonds of the district do not need to take any further action. The district is using every effort to contact all of the old bondholders in order to give them the opportunity to get

G. E. WILL BUILD GIANT TRANSFORMERS FOR DAM

PITTSFIELD, Mass., May 18.—(AP)—The General Electric company today announced it had been awarded a \$1,000,000 contract to build 11 giant transformers for the Boulder Dam power development.

Seven of the transformers will each have a capacity of 287,000 volts. They are the largest commercial type manufactured and will take a year to build.

The Muskogee club in the Western Association, a Detroit farm, will be known as the "Bluebirds."

PENLETON POSTMASTER NAMED BY PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON, May 18.—(AP)—President Roosevelt sent a number of postmaster nominations to the senate today, including George A. Hartman, Pendleton, Ore.

GIVE IT A WHIRL

SAY! SOME ONE MUST HAVE PUT THIS BOY WISE TO THAT STANDARD GASOLINE WITH TETRAETHYL UNSURPASSED!

SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



FRED PERLEY MISSED AN IMPORTANT DIRECTORS' MEETING AT THE GOLF CLUB BECAUSE ONE OF THE NEIGHBORS' CHILDREN WAS PLAYING ON THE SIDEWALK ACROSS HIS DRIVE, AND EVERY TIME FRED TRIED TO MOVE HIS THINGS SO HE COULD GET THE CAR OUT, THE CHILD'S SHRIEKS THREATENED TO ROUSE THE NEIGHBORHOOD

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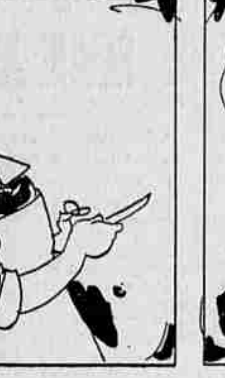
TAILSPIN TOMMY—Marie Acts Mysterious!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The 'Slappin' Down' Season!



THE NEBBS—His Daughter Minnie



BRINGING UP FATHER



RUSSIANS DENY FIRING ON MANCHUKUOAN BOAT



WRIGLEY'S GUM



By O. M. Payne

By Hal Forrest

By Edwin Alger

By Sol Hess

By George McManus