Murder at MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

SYNOPSIS: A policeman and a stranger, the latter apparently a man who has tried to kill Pierre Dufresne, have been found murdered in Dufresne's house. Sergeant Harper at last has found a thread to go on—and it leads to Pierre Dufresne. Dufresne's butler has admitted that his master owned a revolver of the size used to kill the stranger. Now, in the presence of Harper's superior officers, the butler denies the statement.

Chapter 27

THE SEARCH

"THEN what kind of a game—explain yourself, Andrews?"

"It was you, Mr. Harper, who told me that Mr. Dufresne had given you that information about the revolver," Andrews answered patiently. "I did not feel that it was my business to contradict his statements. I see now that it was just a little trick on your part and I withdraw what I said previously."

Harper was boiling, not only over the exposure of his ruse, so neatly and effectively checkmated, but over the collapse of his promising secret.

Pierre Dufresne clapped his old retainer on the shoulder. "A good and faithful servant—" he intoned, laughing merrily at the detective's discomfiture.

Harper glared angrily at the impassive Andrews. "This is a serious matter, I warn you. For the time being the police are in charge of this house. Your duty as a citizen to uphold the law is greater than your duty to an employer."

"But you lied to me, sir," protested the gaunt old man, with a devastating simplicity that sent his master into a fresh peal of laughter.

Harper turned to Dufresne. "All right, sir, but that is not the whole story. Detective Lafferty saw this gun himself. We know it was there."

"I repeat then, that I do not own such a weapon and I have never seen it nor handled it."

Harper bowed. "We will accept that statement, Mr. Dufresne. But we know the gun exists, that it is in this house, and with your permission we will search until we find it."

"You may search as thoroughly as you please, Sergeant."

"Lafferty, bring all the others here. I want everybody to stay in one room while the search is going on."

Dufresne carelessly selected a cigarette. "And what do you expect to prove?" he drawled.

"These cold-blooded murders were committed by some one in this house," Sergeant Harper snapped, "and I intend to get at the truth, no matter whom it involves!"

The household assembled in the small drawing-room, a pleasant and many-windowed room on the main floor, adjoining the breakfast-room.

THIS enforced gathering was quiet enough on the surface but underneath it was seething and boiling with curiosity and excitement. The Sergeant's brief and uncompromising assertion that the case had changed from an unexplained double homicide to an equally unexplained double murder had set the household by the ears.

One by one they denied any knowledge even of the existence of the revolver Harper sought. In the first flush of surprise they did not gather the implication that the murderer was not only alive but one of their number. That realization dawned on them a little later and placed an awkward restraint on the conversation.

Harper, Lafferty, and the two policemen conducted the search, having commanded the company of Mrs. Whitmore, not only because she had the keys to all the locked places in the house, but also to witness that all household and individual property rights were respected. Silent and sullen, her dark brows frowning, Mrs. Whitmore accompanied the officers.

Four men, trained and experienced in such matters, can make short work of any room when the sole object in question is as heavy and bulky as a revolver, but there were many rooms and closets in the house and Harper's methods were painstaking and thorough. He had set out with full confidence in the success of the search.

As their absence lengthened, the waiting group began to split up along lines of natural gravitation. Captain Macklin and Pierre Dufresne sat on a window-seat.

Director Connors had been obliged to leave, owing to the press of other affairs, and he had left without giving any definite answer to Dufresne's request.

The faithful Andrews and the stolid, good-natured John Whitmore stood in a corner and talked together in low tones. There was a sardonic glitter in the old butler's eyes and a determined jut of the jaws, for he was still feeling elated over the neat way he had tripped up the detective's attempt to trap his master. The placid Whitmore, however, was lost and bewildered at the turn affairs had taken.

Young Donaghy, spick and span in his tailored uniform, stood at one of the windows, apart from the others. Busy with his thoughts, he looked out steadily and unseeingly, as if absorbed by a mental puzzle.

Richard Croyden, pensive and subdued, idly ran his sensitive fingers up and down the keyboard of the piano, turned sideways across a corner of the room. He fingered melancholy little snatches of melody, softly, dreamily, his thoughts busy elsewhere. The first muted chords had drawn glances of wonder and disapproval at the intruding of the sound of music at such a time. By the side of the piano, seated in an easy chair, was Aline Croyden, smoking a cigarette and frowning at the swinging toe of her slipper.

THE minutes dragged by interminably to make a quarter-hour, the quarter became a half, the half lengthened to a full hour, and the relentless cycle started on its second lap.

Conversation succumbed to the strain and became forced and desultory as impatience gnawed at every one. Even Dufresne's indignation was reduced to intermittent flashes.

One hour and a half Harper and his men expended on the search and when he returned to the drawing-room no one could tell from his expression wether or not they had been successful. But one glance at Mrs. Whitmore's disdainful air of triumph told them that the much-sought weapon had not yielded the secret of its hiding-place.

Harper's bitter disappointment was betrayed only by his grim tone as he stood before Pierre Dufresne. "I have not found the gun but I am still convinced that it is concealed here in the house. Since no one has left, it can hardly be otherwise."

Dufresne made a gesture of dismissal to the servants, who promptly filed out, that they might talk over this astounding affair more unreservedly in their own quarters. Aline Croyden and her husband left quietly, tactfully leaving the field clear for the discussion that must follow.

"I hope you did not overlook Mrs. Dufresne's room, Harper?" Dufresne asked insolently.

"No, indeed, I looked there very thoroughly," the detective answered.

"And what absurdity do you purpose next? Please don't worry about any inconvenience to my family or myself. I am merely the owner of this property." Dufresne was being purposely insulting.

"I have given orders that no one is to leave this house without being searched. We do not intend to have this revolver carried away. Later we may search for it again, but for the present I shall work along other lines that may bring the same result."

"Going out to study the snow again, I suppose? Or possibly to look for more places where fingerprints should be, but are not. Bah, you have no case, Harper, and you know it."

Dufresne's tones were obviously intended to be baiting, and this thought acted as a counter-irritant to the detective's natural chagrin. "Do you think so?" was his cool reply. "We've just about finished with our study of the material facts. Now we take up the characters and personalities involved. I'll endeavor to follow the good advice you gave me at our first meeting, Mr. Dufresne, and take nothing for granted."

Eyes flashing, lips curling angrily, Pierre Dufresne turned his back on the detective and walked out of the room. Captain Macklin took up his hat and overcoat. "Stay on the job, Harper, but you'd better work fast. Dufresne is a bad man to cross and he carries plenty of weight in certain quarters. He'll have your scalp if he can."

"I'll risk that, Captain. I think he's so damned sure that I can't make a case out of it that he'll let me carry on, just to show me up."

After Captain Macklin had gone, Harper called to Lafferty, and they proceeded to search the room in which the Dufresne household had waited. Lafferty asked, "Do you think any of that crowd would have nerve enough to keep that gun hidden on themselves? Perhaps we should have made a personal search."

Harper shook his head. "The gun would be too bulky and the risk foolish. No, the thing was hidden, and hidden well. We'll have to keep thinking about it."

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Tomorrow, the detectives find a mysterious piece of string.

Formay Recipes

Southern Cocoanut Cake

½ cup Formay
1½ cup sugar
3 egg yolks
1 cup cocoanut
Grater rind 1 orange
3 cups cake flour
½ tsp. baking soda
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1 cup orange juice
3 egg whites

Cream Formay and sugar. Add well beaten egg yolks, cocoanut and orange rind. Sift and measure flour. Add soda, baking powder a ndsalt. Sift again. Add to first mixture alternately with orange juice. Fold in stiffly beaten egg whites. Bake in two layers 30 to 40 minutes at 350 degrees F. Frost with boiled icing. Then sprinkle generously with shredded cocoanut.

Devils Food

½ cup Formay
1½ cups sugar
2 eggs
2 cups cake flour
1 tsp. baking powder
½ cup thick sour milk
2 squares chocolate
1 tsp. soda
½ cup hot water
2 tsp. vanilla
½ tsp. salt

Cream the Formay, sugar and the eggs together. Sift flour, baking powder and salt together 3 times and add to the above mixture, alternating with the sour milk. Beat well after each addition. Melt chocolate and add soda to it in hot water. Add this to the batter a little at a time. Add the vanilla and bake in a loaf pan in a moderate oven for 35 minutes.

Ginger Ice Box Cookies

1 cup Formay
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. soda
4½ cups flour
½ cup molasses
3 tsp. ginger
1 tsp. salt

Cream Formay and sugar together, add well beaten eggs and molasses. Sift flour, soda, salt and ginger and stir gradually into sugar and Formay mixture. Mold into rolls and put in ice box until very firm. Slice thin and bake 12 minutes in hot (400 degrees F.) oven.

Formay Flaky Pastr

½ cup Formay
1½ cup flour
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. baking powder
¼ cup cold water

Cut Formay into sifted dry ingredients. Add water gradually, mixing lightly to form dough. Roll to ⅛ inch thickness on floured board.

Lemon Chiffon Pie

4 eggs
3 tbsps. lemon juice
2 tsp. grated lemon rind
1 cup finely granulated sugar

Beat the egg yolks, stir in ½ cup of sugar, the lemon juice, and grated rind, and cook over hot water until thick. Cool the mixture and fold into the egg whites, which have been beaten stiff with other half of cup of sugar added. Pour into a baked Formay crust and place in a slow oven (325 degrees F.) until lightly browned.

French Meat Pie

1 lb. round steak, ground
½ lb. sausage meat
1 cup mashed potatoes
2 tbsp. chopped onion
Salt and pepper
½ tsp. sage
2 tbsp. Formay
Pie crust

Line a deep pie pan with pie crust and pour in the filling made as follows: Saute the onions in the 2 tbsps. Formay, then add ground steak and sausage, add seasonings, and cook about 15 minutes. Add mashed potatoes, beat and mix well, and add top crust. Bake in a hot oven for first 10 minutes, then reduce to moderate or 350 degrees F. and bake for 45 minutes longer. Serve with tomato sauce.

Formay Biscuits

Cut 4 tbsps. Formay into 2 cups flour sifted with 4 tsps baking powder and 1 tsp. salt. Mix with milk to make a soft dough. Roll on floured board to 1 inch thickness, cut with biscuit cutter and bake in hot oven.

Activities of Legion Auxiliary

By Mrs. G. O. Humphrey

About seventy auxiliary members, their mothers and friends attended the social meeting last Monday evening. The fourteenth anniversary of the auxiliary was observed and a very fitting memorial service for departed members was held. Mrs. Warren Butler and Mrs. C. O. Larison were program chairmen and presented a very entertaining program. Refreshments were served by a committee composed of Ms. Ray Wright, W. A. Holloway, Fred Sweeney, and Katherine Satterlee.

The auxiliary is sponsoring a booth during Jubilee week.

The Poppy sale conducted by the auxiliary was very successful and the unit wishes to take this opportunity to thank all those who helped to make this sale a success—the generous response of the general public was greatly appreciated.

Buffalo Doctor Hurt

ROSEBURG, Ore., June 2.—(AP)—Dr. John R. Gray of Buffalo, N. Y., suffered a broken arm and severe bruises in an automobile wreck on the Pacific highway 12 miles south of Roseburg.

SAVING A SEAT

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

S'MATTER POP— By C. M. Payne

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Betty Seems Confused! By Hal Forrest

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Sad, Sad Story By Edwin Alger

THE NEBBS—A Big Little Guy By Sol Hess

BRINGING UP FATHER By George McManus

Foots Creek

FOOTS CREEK, June 2.—(Spl.)—Eighth grade pupils from here attending the graduation exercises at Ashland, May 25, were Kenneth Ward, Etta Perfountain, Donald Skeleton, Phyllis Miller, Wallace Boling, Ross Turpin and Homer Harrison. Mrs. Ed Perfountain and Mrs. R. L. Miller also attended.

Mrs. Tom Gallagher entertained several of the young people of the neighborhood the evening of May 26, among whom were Glen Birdseye, Leroy Cameron, Edsal and Audrey White, Rowland Miller and James Martin.

Mr. and Mrs. George Hutchins have been ill for several days.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Miller and Mrs. Jay Davidson spent Decoration day on Applegate and visited the cemetery at Williams Creek. They were accompanied by Leslie Bailey of Portland, who is a brother of Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Davidson.

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Darling and daughter, Gladys, and Mrs. A. Ladd of Fort Klamath, who were in Gold Hill for Decoration day, visited with friends here in the afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Woodcock and son, Lyle, spent Monday evening with Mr. and Mrs. George Lance.

Mr. and Mrs. Lou Lingreen, who have moved from Gold Hill to the Wallace place across the highway from Bonney's grill, spent May 31 with Miss Amy Koster.

Mr. and Mrs. Clay Biles and children spent May 26 with Mr. and Mrs. R. Hunsley at Table Rock.

Mr. and Mrs. Ted Dole and Mr. and Mrs. John Dole were Medford visitors May 26.

WASHINGTON, June 2.—(AP)—The Bolivian government has protested to the state department against stopping sale of munitions for Bolivia in her war with Paraguay over the Gran Chaco.