

OCTAGON HOUSE

BY PHOEBE ATWOOD TAYLOR



The Story So Far: Asey Mayo, Cape Cod detective, is privately investigating the murder of Marina Lorne, whose husband's post office mural has aroused Quano-met. She was killed by a left handed blow from her sister's knife. Suspected Pam Frye disappears because an unknown person who smokes Turkish tobacco is trailing her to discover the whereabouts of \$50,000 worth of ambergris Pam found the day of the murder. Agreeable Tim Carr, a boarder at the Frye's Octagon House, is left handed, smokes Turkish tobacco, and hated Marina. Gabby Nettie Hobbs who swears she saw Pam commit the murder, is called a liar by Peggy Boone, an artist. And Roddy Strutt, whose plane crashed in the square, pays Nettie \$5,000 to keep his name out of her story. Asey decides to see the injured pilot.

Chapter 17

The Indestructible Man

"By the way, how's the crowd over to Octagon House getting along?" Asey asked the traffic cop. "Hanson's got 'em in order now, I guess. But they ripped up the flower beds, though, and a couple was tryin' to make off with that iron deer before he got 'em under control. There's some still around the garage at Lornes'. Someone went by a while ago with a load of barbed wire, an' there was a state cop on the truck. I guess they're settin' up a barrier. Where you bound?"

"Hiher an' yon. Oh, if you know where pickle limes come from, Jerry, go tell the minister's wife over at the Exchange. Tell her I think she could prob'ly palm off lemons dipped in brine, if she got hard up. Oh—an' tell 'em they're missin' a good bet in taffy apples. They'd ought to fetch half a dollar, an' the prime expense is sticks."

He extracted Syl's truck from the maze of parked cars, and bounced over to the little Pochet hospital.

The nurse in charge was the daughter of a neighbor of his. She hesitated a moment when Asey addressed her by name, and then she laughed.

"Why, Asey," she said, "I hardly recognized you in that outfit. I don't think I'd have known you if I hadn't seen Syl's truck. That truck used to belong to Father, you know. It's a family legend. Isn't this business over in Quano-met simply hideous? And is it true that you're not helping with the case?"

"What do you think?" Asey asked.

"You can't fool your neighbors," she said. "Of course you are. You're up to something, dressed this way, and driving that truck. I suppose you want to see Earl Jennings, don't you?"

"Who's he?"

"That Quano-met selectman who got bumped in Roddy Strutt's plane crash last night."

"As a matter of fact," Asey said, "I'd like to see Roddy Strutt's pilot. Can it?"

She shook her head. "I'm afraid not," she said. "He's in pretty bad shape. It's a family legend, wouldn't you agree to sending for Dr. Carter, but Roddy wasn't interested. Roddy isn't even interested enough to notify the fellow's family, if he's got any. We telegraphed all the people whose names and addresses we found in his wallet, but no one's answered, and two wires came back. Unknown, or something."

"Get Carter," Asey said, "and charge him to me, will you? And—"

"Asey, that's swell of you!"

"Not a bit," Asey said. "And when he gets so that he can be asked questions, let me know. Be sure. And—just for fun, if Roddy should take it into his head to see the fellow—what's his name? Brigham? Well, if Roddy asks to see Brigham, cause him to be thwarted, will you?"

"Somethin' Queer"

"I will, and I'll tell the rest. We're all so mad at him, and anyway, you'll be taking charge. That'll make it all right. You know," she added, "I shouldn't say this, but there's something queer about this crash. Brigham's sleeping in the car, but he's been unconscious, and he kept muttering about the plane, and Roddy, and calling him names, and telling him to keep off. It was sort of bloodcurdling."

"Could you say, Susan, if all Brigham's injuries come from the crash?"

"Where else—oh, Oh, I see what you mean. That someone might have hurt him before it. I couldn't say. Asey Carter might be able to tell you, and Brigham can, certainly, when he's better. It was quite a crash, enough to bang up those cars in the square, and shake up Earl Jennings—look, won't you take pity on him and see him? He's simply raving about this Quano-met business, and everyone in town's so busy making money out of the tourists, they haven't time to do more than send consoling messages by phone. His wife has been over twice, for ten seconds. She's making doughnuts by the hundred thousands, and she says if she can

live through another day, they'll have a new car."

"Is this Jennings hurt bad?" Asey asked.

"No, he's sort of an indestructible man. He's just bruised, but his doctor wants him to stay for a couple of days, and rest. He's got a bad heart. Won't you see him?"

"Sure, for a minute," Asey said. "But I don't know the man."

"That won't matter. He knows you, and he's so eager to talk with someone."

Mr. Jennings, a burly six-footer who seemed far too big for his bed, smiled at Asey and extended his hand.

"Boy," he said feelingly, "am I glad to see a human face!"

Asey laughed. "I hear you're sort of marooned an' deserted."

"Oh, lots of folks phoned, but as soon as they find out I'm all right, and just being kept in cold storage, they send their regards and say they'll drop over when I get back home. You can't blame 'em. There hasn't been so much money loose in town for years. My boy—he's 15—he's had trouble this summer, selling little wooden windmills for a dime apiece. Today, he and his friend got the idea of making little octagon houses out of two by fours, and painting 'em up, and they're getting a dollar apiece for just as many as they can make. Think of it! If only the doctor—but I suppose he's right. I wouldn't keep quiet, if I got out. I'd be out hawking with the rest. Say, what do you think about this murder?"

"There's more to it than meets the eye," Asey said, "if that's what you mean."

"Sure there is," Jennings agreed. "After I heard about it, I went up town—I was going to rout out the other selectman, and have him resign, and they told me you was away, and then that fool crashed his plane, and I landed over here. But you know what I think—and what everyone else in town thinks? We think its someone that was sore about being pictured in that mural. You don't know how mad people in Quano-met are about that!"

"Red Lead Paint"

"By degrees," Asey said, "I'm gatherin' that there's been considerable indignation. But the point is, is there any one person that's madder than any other? And why should Marina be killed, and not Lorne, who painted the picture?"

"Oh, Marina put him up to it," Jennings said. "Lorne's a fool. The only way that fellow can think it with a paint brush in his hand, and then he isn't too bright. Everyone knows she put him up to painting in the faces. He couldn't have thought of it by himself."

"Then you think it's a local person, who knew enough to figure that Marina was to blame?"

"I do," Jennings said emphatically. "And I thought right off the bat about Aaron Frye. He's in the mural, Father Time, or something. I don't know. But he's had more than that from that daughter of his in the past. So has Pam. The way I figure, if they haven't killed Marina before, that picture wouldn't move 'em to kill her now. They'll think I'm crazy, for sure. I thought of Nettie."

"Is she in the paintin'?" Asey asked. "I see it, but I got to laughin' so, I had to go out before I took in more than the main panel."

"The other panels are the ones with Quano-met faces," Jennings said. "Nettie's an old hag gutting a fish."

"A fish wife, huh? Well, that's apt," Asey said.

"Uh-huh. And beside her are two pickle limes. She's had a jar of pickle limes in that window of her store for years. Then I decided it couldn't be Nettie, because the time they said she left Octagon House and the time Pam found her sister, they didn't hitch up. And besides, I had a better idea. And you'll think I'm crazy, for sure. I thought of Roddy Strutt."

"Is he in the mural, too?"

"He sure is. With two girls on his lap, and his face—well, it's Roddy all right," Jennings said bitterly. "Anyway, last night when he crawled out of that plane, he was laughin' like it was a big joke. I hate him anyway, but that made me sore, with Brigham lying there. I limped over, and lousy as I felt, I kicked him square in the seat of his pants. Knocked him down, too. And while he was down, I poked him a couple more kicks."

"That," Asey said approvingly, "was the proper gesture."

"And you know what I noticed when I kicked him? A couple of streaks on his pants. I thought they were blood at first, but later I seen they weren't. They were red lead paint. And I'm a plumber by trade. And yesterday morning I spent up to Lornes', fixing up that pump, and painting their water tanks with red lead. And the old water tank that I painted the big one, that's out in the garage where Marina was killed. See what I mean?"

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Tomorrow: Asey does a bit of thinking.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

THE GREAT COMET OF 1843 MISSED HITTING THE SUN BY ONLY 32,000 MILES!
(Nearest approach on record)
IT TRAVELED 1,280,000 MILES AN HOUR AND HAD A TAIL 150,000,000 MILES IN LENGTH!

ZOOBU--
A year-old elephant, Atlantic City, N. J., HAD TO WEAR BRACES ON ITS FORE LEGS AFTER INJURING THEM IN A FALL...

32 HOME RUNS IN A SINGLE DAY--
WERE BATTED IN BY MAJOR LEAGUE PLAYERS, June 13, 1937

"A FRIEND IN NEED"
L. E. LOOKABILL, Roanoke, Va., VISITED A SICK FRIEND 10 MINUTES A DAY FOR 1915 SUCCESSIVE DAYS-- THEN WAS A PALLBEARER AT HIS FUNERAL...

A Friend In Need
Ten minutes a day, every day for five and a quarter years, L. E. Lookabill, Roanoke, Va., visited a sick friend in a local hospital. Lookabill set this time aside for the one purpose and let nothing interrupt it. Death alone intervened to halt his daily visits which continued without a miss for 1915 consecutive days. Lookabill in all spent 319 hours, or 13 1/4 days at his friend's bedside, yet stranger still is the fact that this time was divided into 10-minute daily installments spread over a long period of time. The sick friend was Captain Edward J. Rowan, former chief clerk of the Norfolk and Western Railway at Roanoke. Captain Rowan suffered three strokes before his death. Lookabill says, "I called and entertained him for about ten minutes each time for 1915 days in succession and found him a real companion, never once referring to his ailment." Lookabill paid a final tribute to his friend by serving as a pallbearer at his funeral.

Comet of 1843
Appearing suddenly in the northern skies about the middle of March, 1843, a comet was observed by astronomers to pass within 32,000 miles of the sun's surface, smallest perihelion distance ever recorded. Comets are by far the most numerous objects of the solar system. The total number of planets, including the minor planets or asteroids, is about 50,000, while it is estimated that there are at least 120,000 comets regularly visiting the sun. Contrary to popular belief, comets tails do not invariably point away from the sun. While matter driven from the comet's head by solar action would show this effect, it is quite common for the tail to consist of several streamers radiating from the head like a fan, proving that there are other forces at work driving out the tail.

Precautions Realistic
LONDON (AP)—Smelling bottles containing actual warfare gases and a "mixture Z," made up to represent mustard gas, are being used to train Britain's air raid precautions instructors.

WINDOW GLASS—We sell window glass and will replace your broken windows reasonably. Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

Tomorrow: The Walk of Fame!

HIGH FLY By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

AS A HIGH FLY IS HIT, SHOUTS, "I'VE GOT IT!" AND BACKS UP FAST

REVERSES AND COMES FORWARD FAST

PLAYS HIMSELF WHERE HE THINKS IT'S COMING DOWN AND REPEATS THAT HE'S GOT IT

DECIDES HE HAS MISJUDGED IT AND CIRCLES UNDER IT WITH LITTLE DARTS TO LEFT AND RIGHT

AS BALL IS ABOUT TO LAND SAFE TEN FEET AWAY SHRIEKS AT NO ONE IN PARTICULAR, "TAKE IT!"

PASSES A FEW HALF-HEARDED BLAME-SHIFTING REMARKS WITH TEAM-MATES, AND TAKES UP HIS POSITION AGAIN FOUNDING GLOVE VERY HARD

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S MATTER POI By C. M. PAYNE

LOOK, AMBROSE! CHERRY TREE!

HUH?

I'LL COME AROUND AN' HELP MYSELF WHEN THA CHERRIES GET RIPE!

OO! WHAT'LL YA SAY IF THA FARMER CATCHES YA UP IN THA CHERRY TREE?

LET ME THINK

I'D SAY, I'M SORRY BUT I JUST FELL OUT OF AN AIRPLANE

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TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Hunch That Proved True! By HAL FORRESTER

RUSTY, REV'ER AT SEVENTEEN HUNDRED BRING 'ER UP ANOTHER HUNDRED!

NINETEEN HUNDRED

TWENTY-TWO HUNDRED

GREAT GUNS!

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BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Pleasant Future By EDWIN ALGER

GEE, RUSTY, IF WE CAN RAISE HEAVYWEIGHT TURKEYS NOBODY CAN LICK US IN THIS BUSINESS!

OUR BIRDS'LL BE SO BIG AND COST US SO LITTLE IN THE RAISIN' THAT THE JIPPEMS JUST WON'T BE ABLE TO UNDERSSELL US—

LET'S START A WHOLE LOT MORE ON DR. KILEY'S SUNSHINE PELLETS, BUT LET'S NOT FORGET TO CONCENTRATE ON THE ONE YOU BEGAN ON—

WHAT'S THE IDEA, BEN?

THINK OF THE AD A GIANT TURKEY WILL BE—WE'LL EXHIBIT HIM IN TOWN!

OH, BOY! WILL THAT START FOLKS TALKIN'!

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THE NEBBS—A Good Place to Eat By SOL HERSH

STEVE IS MAKING HIMSELF ACQUAINTED WITH THE TOWN OF NORTHVILLE... AND HERE WE FIND HIM IN THE "COMMON" INN, OWNED BY MAX AND EMMA

THAT WAS AS GOOD A STEAK AS I EVER WRAPPED MY TONGUE AROUND, AND I'D BE AN INGRATE IF I DIDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT IT

I'LL BET YOU'RE NEBBS BROTHER—WITH THAT NAPKIN ACROSS YOUR MOUTH YOU'D JUST NEED ABOUT SIX HAIRS ON YOUR HEAD TO BE HIM!

YES, I'M HIS BROTHER AND I'M PROUD OF IT, BUT I CAN'T GET MUCH PLEASURE HAVING PEOPLE SAY I LOOK LIKE HIM

OH, I DON'T KNOW, I THINK MR NEBB IS GOOD LOOKIN' AND HE'S THE KINDEST MAN IN THIS WORLD

YES, HE'S KIND—I WORKED FOR HIM—NOBODY'S EVER GOIN' TO GET FALLIN' ARCHES GARRVIN' MONEY OUT OF HIS HOTEL

DON'T YOU BELIEVE HIM, MR NEBB, I COOKED FOR HIM FOR YEARS—HE GAVE ME \$25 A WEEK AND LET ME CARRY BONES HOME FOR PADDY AND THE DOG!

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MEDICS FORM GROUP TO BUILD TECHNIQUE FOR CRASH VICTIMS

SAN FRANCISCO, June 16.—(AP)—A new medical organization to deal with the terrific toll of auto and machine accidents was formed here today under the name of the American Association for Traumatic Surgery.

Autos and machines, it was declared have created new emergency medical problems. Traffic injuries were asserted to be as grave as those of the battlefield and to offer an opportunity to save many lives by building up techniques to treat victims within the first hour after injury.

The new organization includes general surgeons expert on broken bones and abdominal, blood vessel, nerve, joint and head injuries. It started with a membership of 150, drawn from delegates to the American Medical Association now in session here. The membership will be limited to 200. It includes many teachers of medicine, as well as practitioners.

Chinese Laundrymen Aid Home Defenders

HONGKONG, June 16.—(AP)—Four American ambulances bought by Chinese laundrymen in New York arrived today on the steamer Greyhound Castle on their way to Canton for "China's heroic defenders."

With them were two ambulances bought by Chinese in Manila and 15 huge containers of American aviation products, reported to include 15 war