

OCTAGON HOUSE

BY PHOEBE ATWOOD TAYLOR

The story so far: Asey Mayo, Cape Cod detective, is investigating yesterday's murder of Marina Lorne, whose husband's post office mural has aroused Quonomet. She was killed by a left handed blow from her sister's knife and Pam Frpe is suspected. Pam disappears after hiding \$50,000 worth of ambergris she found. Roddy Strutt's alibi plane crash looks deliberate, and the alibi of agreeable Tim Carr boards at the Frpe's Octagon House. A false Asey on orders Tim's grandmother ask him, "Where did the girl put it?" Then Jack Lorne brings startling news. He has discovered he was never married to Marina, because she was already married to Tim Carr.

Chapter 23

Incriminating Evidence

AND this other. This note, Asey picked it up. "Twenty-five thousand dollars, payable to Marina Carr, on demand. Signed by Timothy Carr, and witnessed by two people. Where, Lorne, in heaven's name, did you find these two chunks of dynamite?"

"I found them this morning, in a tin box in the bottom drawer of a wardrobe trunk of hers. I never knew she had such a box. I was hunting for a will and insurance policies—I told her to put 'em in the bank box, but they weren't there. So I hunted, and I found this box. There were lots of other trophies there. Diaries. Everything. You—want me to tell you about those diaries?"

Asey nodded. "Or you could let me see them."

"No one'll ever see those!" Lorne said savagely. "I burned them, page by page!"

"Was that wise?" Asey asked. "I see how you might have wanted to, but this note and this marriage certificate'll put Tim Carr in a hole."

"The diaries," Lorne said, "would hang him. That's one of the minor reasons I burned them. The real reason was me, Me, and Aaron, and Pam. I decided that the three of us had taken enough. We—" he gulped. "We took plenty, we did."

"Tim inclined his head," Asey said, "that might be perking you all have. Now, she married Tim before she went through the motions of marryin' you. That right?"

Lorne closed his eyes and leaned on his elbows.

"Today," he spoke as if he were quoting, "today I hooked Tim Carr."

In the same voice, he sketched the story.

"Hooked Tim Carr. Found today he's all front. No money. Tightwad. Everything for that grandmother. I hated her. Today I swapped his prize money and the old lady's jewelry. Going abroad with Lorne, the sap. He'll be famous some day. Got Carr fixed. The sample note he wrote for his math class, when they learned about making out checks and notes and accounts. Grabbed it from his basket and ironed it out last week. Got Sammy and Peter to sign. They'd sign anything if I asked them. Let Carr try to divorce me."

Asey whistled softly. "I get it. If Tim tried to divorce her, she'd raise hell with that note. But her witnesses—"

"She thought of them," Lorne said. "She thought of everything. They witnessed it in the apartment, while Carr was there, just after he'd written something at the desk. She shifted the paper. The diary had all the details. She had him cold. For Carr to divorce her would have cost him \$25,000, and I guess it might as well have been a million as far as he was concerned. Marina was his grandmother. That's why she did it. The grandmother told her where she got off, and she was going to make the Carrs suffer for it. She had them, don't you see? If they tried to do anything about her, or her and me, all she had to do was to wave that note. She had them. And she also had some pretty rabid letters from Carr. I burned those."

"Threatening her?"

Lorne nodded. "I started to give them to Hanson, and then I burned them up. They would have hanged him."

"And you don't want him to hang, even though you think he killed your wife?"

Played For A Sucker

ALL of us, Pam and Aaron and Carr and I," Lorne said, "we've suffered enough. I don't know—I'm not supposed to be very bright, and I'm not. I don't catch on to things quickly—God knows I don't!" he laughed bitterly. "But people who do things like Marina did, some time or other, things catch up with them. They caught up with her. I don't know how to explain what I feel. I'm not angry with Carr now."

He lighted a cigarette, and Asey noticed his hands. They were long slender feminine hands.

"The diaries had the whole story," Lorne went on. "What she did to the family, and before she met me, and afterwards, and who she did, and everything. Everyone. Roddy. She was playing him for a sucker. Anyway, it's all over with

now. Carr did it, not Roddy, as Peg thought. And I hope that you and Hanson can't get him."

"Know anything about ambergris, Lorne?" Asey asked.

"That's what Pam's always talking about," Lorne said. "What she's always hunting. I never understood much about it. It's used for making perfumes, isn't it, or something like that? It's a whale's chin or tail. I never could see why she made such a fuss over it."

"It's a sort of greyish stuff," Asey said, "that grows in the intestines of a whale. Fatty and a little smelly, an' sort of streaked like marble. You can probably get around \$35 an ounce for it."

"An ounce," Lorne said. "An ounce?"

"Yup. An' yesterday, Pam found a lump about 100 pounds out on the point. And Marina found Pam. After a squabble, Marina brought it back in Roddy's beach wagon, to your garage. And—"

"Where is it now?"

Asey shrugged. "Pam went over there later, and found Marina dead, and she removed it. I thought she brought it to Octagon House. It's not in the cellar, an' the cops didn't uncover it. I don't know where it is."

"That's swell for Pam, isn't it?" Lorne said. "She—oh. But if someone found it and took it—gee, you've got to find it for her, haven't you?"

Asey looked at him curiously. There was no doubt that the fellow was perfectly sincere.

"Yes, I got to find it before someone else does," Asey said, "an' someone else is huntin' it. Now you don't breathe a word of this. You know. Not to anyone. But can you think of any part of the house where it might be?"

"No," Lorne said. "You'd think from the outside that the place was awfully queer, but it isn't, except for the shape of some of the rooms and the arrangements. I'll get a pencil and see if I can think it out."

"Think hard," Asey said as he got up, "while I investigate Brother Carr. You know, it's just possible that this marriage certificate an' note was what he meant, an' not the ambergris—come on."

"All right," Lorne said. "You know, I—I keep wondering what this is going to do to my work."

"Huh?"

"My work," Lorne said. "Of course this publicity has got me dozens of offers—but what will this do—to my work, you see?"

Ory in Quonomet

Asey nodded, and suppressed a smile. If Lorne had got to the point where he could gauge his reactions to the murder in terms of his work, then there was little chance in worrying about him, or feeling sorry for him.

"See," Asey said. "Yes, I see."

As they walked up past the house, Asey paused by the cellar window on which he had been working.

"Mind's well take two seconds," he said, "to finish up this pane here."

Before he finished with the pane Peggy Boone came up the road vaulted the barbed wire barrier and strolled up the driveway.

"Ah," she said. "Mr. Fix-it. You get around, don't you?"

"He's Asey Mayo, Peg," Jack said. "I've told him everything."

"I began to suspect that he was," she said, "after I left Nettie's. Your eyes give you away, you know. Do you know where Pam is?"

"I've got a lot of faith in her," Asey said. "She can take care of herself."

"I hope so—and have you heard about the town? Nettle has joined the midway, and between her and the fan dancers, it's bedlam. There's a nickel-a-dance joint here set up—Why, the whole place looks like a gold rush camp. Forty niners on a bust."

"How are the local boys taking it?" Asey asked.

"The novasion? Oh, they're trying to stop the riot. So, Hanson, with some of his cops. But you might as well turn back a cyclotron with a bean blower. Honestly, it's awful! I haven't seen the like since the last bootleggers dumped their last loads on the clam flats, and the town was knee deep in bootleggers for days. It's the same sort of thing, only they've got something to do besides drink. And it's not the local folk. The natives are furiously trying to get the National Guard out or something. They'll have to. The crowd's got to the stage here it thinks it's fun to start fires."

"You're makin' it up," Asey said, "as you go along!"

"I'm not!" Peg protested. "I'm not, I tell you it's an orgy! There were three brush fires when I was up there, and a steam train went up in flames. And they've tipped the fire engine over on its side. Of course, it's a silly old engine, and it looks funny, and that siren sounds funny, but still there's a reason—oh, well, I suppose Hanson will solve the problem some how. . . . Where are you going?"

Asey looked worried when he returned.

"I can't even get the office," he said. "The line sounds dead."

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Blasphemy at Hallfax

Disaster at its worst visited Halifax, N. C., on December 6, 1917, following the detonation of 225 tons of T. N. T., greatest ever heard on earth.

Fire, flood, earthquake, tornado and blizzard ripped and gutted the city—leaving 2000 dead, 6000 crippled and 10,000 homeless. Three hundred acres of the city were leveled; property damage totaled \$35,000,000.

Halifax, previous to the explosion, was the richest port in the world, with the rich war trade of shipping munitions and supplies to France and England. Halifax had grown to be the third largest British port.

Into the harbor that fatal morning moved the French munitionier, "Mont Blanc," carrying from New York 450,000 pounds of deadly trinitrotoluol (T. N. T.), 2000 tons of picric acid and 35 tons of benzol. The most powerful explosives known to science were stowed away in her holds.

As she steamed up the busy harbor, the empty Belgian relief ship, "Imo," suddenly appeared before her. Collision was inevitable. With a rending crash, the Imo's prow ripped into her side.

Electricity, all who witnessed the accident froze—then broke madly for cover. Fire had broken out on the Mont Blanc! For 17 minutes it flickered. The French ship's crew went over the side. Some of the Imo's crew boarded the munitionier and attempted to quench the flames. They did not live to tell what they saw.

With the roar of a thousand cannons, the Mont Blanc ripped open straight upward shot a column of surging gas that mushroomed into a cloud of death. The detonation was heard 62 miles away.

The blast of hot gas blanketed the harbor, swept inland as a raging tornado. Hundreds fell dead before it as buildings collapsed, trees gave way. A tidal wave followed, hundreds more were killed. At 9:05, 9:10 and 10:05 earthquakes followed the disaster.

Climaxing Halifax's day of disaster was a terrific blizzard, worst in the city's history, which greatly hampered relief work. In court it was decided both ships were equally at fault in causing the tragedy of Halifax.

Tomorrow: The Five Most-Used Letters.

LARGEST FISH HAUL DOCKED AT ASTORIA

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The company reported delivery of bluebacks, the first appearance of the run this season.

Bombay is called "the gateway of India."

The ancient city walls of Teintsin, China, were pulled down in 1900.

POTATO SELLER HELD FOR THEFT OF TRUCK

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Closing time for Two Late to Classy Ads is 1:30 p. m.

DEFEATED CANDIDATE MAY SEEK RECOUNT

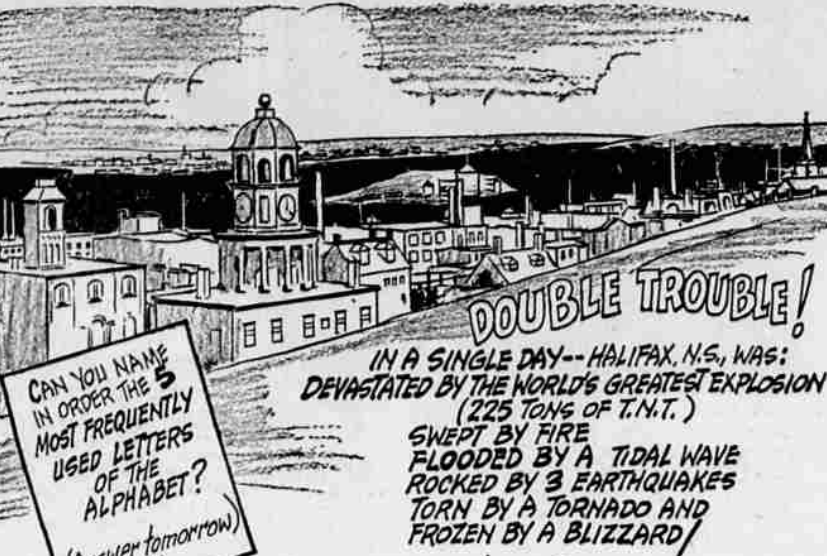
MINNEAPOLIS, June 23.—(AP)—Hjalmar Petersen, losing candidate in farmer-labor gubernatorial race in Tuesday's Minnesota primary election said today he would ask that ballots in St. Louis county be impounded and that he might demand a recount.

He made the announcement when additional returns from the north-eastern Minnesota county had pushed Governor Elmer Benson's lead to 13,000 after the lead saw-sawed during the early balloting. Petersen, railroad and warehouse commissioner, said Benson's two to one lead in St. Louis county "doesn't sound reasonable to us."

Returns from 3340 of 3739 precincts

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



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TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Gate Crashers Foiled!

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, TOMMY?

SHURE AN' IT'S GLAD I AM YE CAME, TOMMY! THESE BUCKETS WERE TRYIN' TO CR-R-RASH TH' GATE, AN'...

WE'RE NEWS-PAPERMEN... JUST WANTED TO GET PICTURE OF THE MERCURY

MAY I SEE YOUR PRESS BADGES, PLEASE?

I... MUST HAVE LEFT IT... IN MY OTHER CLOTHES...

DO YOU MEAN TO INSINUATE...

AHA!

I MEAN TO SAY FLATLY, THAT I THINK YOU'RE PHONIES... AND YOU CAN TELL YOUR BOSS, SNEADE, I SAID SO!

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Take a Look!

CALM DOWN, YOU YOUNG IDIOT! WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY A GIANT TURKEY!

JUST WHAT I SAID, POP—BEN WEBSTER'S GOT A TURKEY SO BIG—HE SAYS IT'S A NEW BREED THEY'RE DEVELOPIN'—

HUMPH! POSSIBLY JUST A FREAK—

IT DIDN'T LOOK LIKE NO FREAK TO ME—COME ON, TAKE A LOOK AT IT YOURSELF—

I CERTAINLY WILL!

THE NEBBS—It Looks Bad

JUDGE, I NEED A LITTLE LEGAL INFORMATION VERY BADLY

WELL, WHAT IS IT, MY GOOD FRIEND?

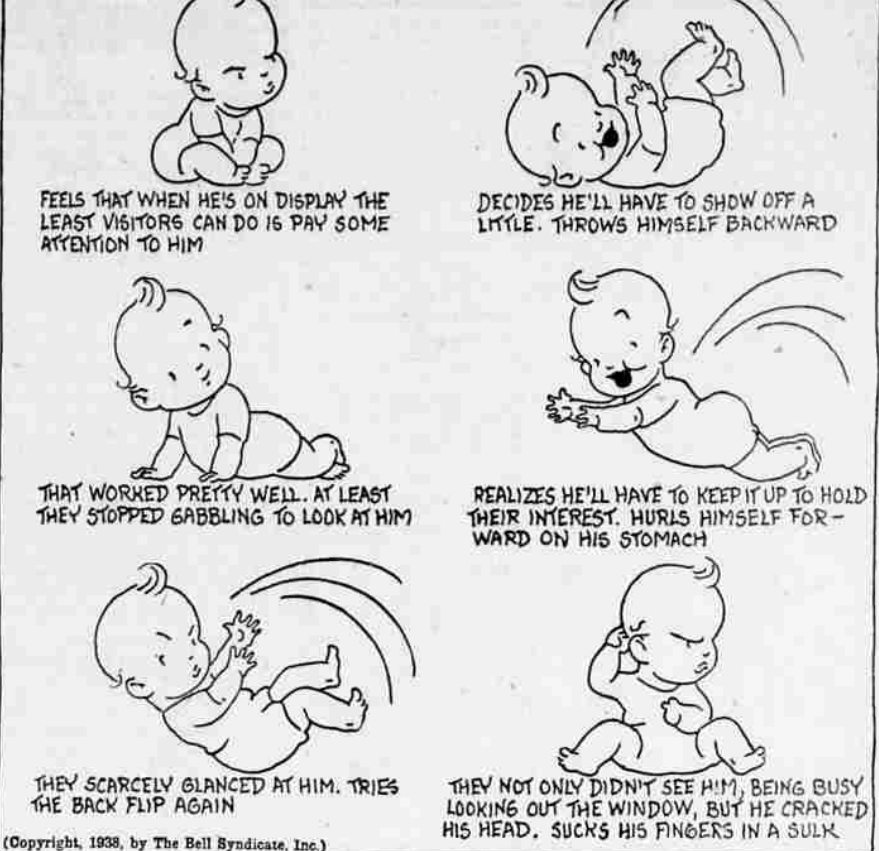
MY BROTHER FOUND OUT I FELL HEIR TO AUNT OPHELIA'S ESTATE... AFTER ALL THE IMPROVEMENTS I MADE, CAN HE HORN IN AND CLAIM PART OF THE ESTATE?

AS I REMEMBER, YOUR AUNT LEFT NO WILL AND YOU WERE THE ONLY LIVING RELATIVE THEY COULD FIND—NOW ANOTHER ONE BOBS UP AND ID SAY HE WAS A CASE

IF THE THING COMES TO COURT, LEAVE IT TO THE IGNORANCE OF THE JURY—YOU HAVEN'T CRUTCHES TO STAND ON WITH A JUDGE

SHOW-OFF

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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3 MATTER POI

By C M PAYNE



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