

# OCTAGON HOUSE

BY PHOEBE ATWOOD TAYLOR



So far Assey Mayo, Cape... 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 Frye is suspected. Pam disappears after hiding \$50,000 worth of ambergris in the woods. Assey knows someone is after the ambergris and he is trying to locate it. Then Jack Lorne brings startling news. He has discovered he was never married to Marina because she was already married to a greasy Tim Carr, boarder at the Frye's Octagon House, whom she was blackmailing. She was also playing around with Roddy Strutt, whose plane crash furnished a suspicious alibi. Peggy Boone, an artist, seems worried about Pam's absence.

### Chapter 24

#### A Questionin' Fire

"SAY," the trooper who had been walking up to them, "Say, I can't find Shorty or O'Malley—you seen 'em? They ought to be around. The car's here. But I can't find 'em."

"Been back in the woods?" asked Assey.

"Say, I been all over."

"Probably they're after the Carrs and Aaron Frye," Assey said. "I wouldn't worry. Now listen, they're having a real riot up town. I want you to get your car and go find Hanson, and tell him to get fire trucks from other towns, and use the hose—"

"But Shorty and O'Malley—I got to find them. And I can't leave this place!"

"We'll look after things here," Assey said. "You go get Hanson. I'll find your friends. You trot along. That's an order. If it makes you feel better, I outrank Hanson in an honorary way, an I'm an honorary officer of the law of this town, according to a piece of paper I got to home. You go on. I'll take the responsibility—"

"Well, okay. But I'd like to know where Shorty and O'Malley are," the trooper said. "I don't see where they could be. You find 'em, will you? I'm worried—"

Assey promised, and the trooper went off reluctantly to his car.

"Much," Peg Boone said, "against his better judgment, I know, I—well, well, look at precious!"

She pointed to Emma Goldman, strolling majestically out of the woods, her leash trailing behind her.

"Run away, huh?" Assey said.

"Hi, Emma. Where's your folks? Come here 'fore you get caught up with that leash—"

The cat walked up to him and rubbed her head against his trouser leg.

"Funny," Peg Boone leaned down and stroked the cat's head. "She seemed frightened. Isn't this odd, everyone missing? Shouldn't we yell, in chorus? O'Malley!" she yelled at the top of her voice.

"Shorty! Aaron Frye! Carrs!" Assey laughed. "You raised some one," he said. "I hear—oh, Mrs. Carr."

She panted up to them. "Have you seen Emma—oh, thank goodness! Something frightened her, and she ran like a streak. Pulled the leash square out of my hand. I never knew her to—"

"Where's Tim?" Assey asked.

"And Aaron?"

"Aren't they here?" Mrs. Carr asked in some surprise. "They aren't! Aaron wandered off, and Tim went after him—long ago."

"Have you seen two cops, named O'Malley and Shorty?"

"No, I haven't seen anyone. Except a skunk, after Emma left. And two squirrels. All the animal life seems to be in a perfect terrible rush this evening. I don't know whether Emma got her fright from them, or they got it from her—stop tugging, Emma! Look at her ears!"

"Listen," Assey said. "Listen—"

"I don't hear anything," Peg said. "Do you, Mrs. Carr?"

Assey motioned for her to be still. "Somethin' queer," he said. "It's a rushin' sound, seems like. I'll walk around 'back by the barn, an' see what I can see—"

"Emma!" Mrs. Carr said in exasperation as Assey hurried off. "Emma, what in the world is the matter—"

"Gosh!" Jack Lorne said. "Gosh, look—look at that barn!"

**Flaming Like A Torch**

PEGGY BOONE raced after him around to the back of the house. The scene before her brought her to a standstill.

Some 150 feet from the Octagon House, the old octagon barn was flaming like a piece of cotton wool dipped in gasoline. She had never seen anything so completely and so furiously on fire. Assey and Jack Lorne, both choking, ran up to where she stood.

"Phew!" Assey said. "Phew! I was just goin' to shove that side door open when the whole thing went—plut! I kind of wonder that I got a face."

"Don't tell me!" Jack said. "I saw you. One minute the barn was all right—the next split second it was a torch! Can't you do something? What'll we do? We've got to do something—"

"Like what," Assey inquired.

"Put it out! Call help—hurry come on, we've got to do something!" Jack said excitedly.

"This house," Assey pointed out "has only got a pump. The water system at your house is on the blink. The fire truck's out of commission up with the town riot. So's the phone. What can you do?"

"We can't just sit!" Peggy protested.

"Maybe you can't," Assey returned, "but that's what I'm goin' to do. That barn's tinder pure an' simple. It'll be down in five minutes. It's even hot here. We better move up onto the porch."

"But the house!" Jack said.

"Suppose the house should catch?" "S'posin' it does?" Assey said.

Jack Lorne looked at him in amazement. Had Assey Mayo forgotten that Pam's ambergris was in the Octagon House somewhere? For a man who was supposed to be so clever, Jack decided Assey Mayo was pretty dumb. Stupid.

He started to say so, but Assey wide-mouthed yawn shocked him into silence.

"Heat," he remarked, "always makes me awful sleepy. You set now, why the cat was in such a fidget. She seen smoke an' smellin' runnin'. Prob'ly there was dozens of animal livin' in that ark. When the fire started, the heat it, Emma seen 'em, an' she cat that she is, she knew enough to run."

"I don't believe it!" Peg insisted.

"Didn't you ever see a forest fire, with all the animals runnin' from it?" Assey asked. "Fire panics 'em. Say, you know I wouldn't wonder if maybe perhaps this house didn't catch, at the time it's kind of warm in sympathy, sort of."

"Aren't you going to do anything?" Peg demanded. "Are you just going to sit there? We must do something—something! They always drape wet blankets around when there are fires like this, over my way. Shouldn't we?"

"Within' With Disappointment"

"IF THIS was a proper an' logical Cape house," Assey said pulling out his pipe, "we could dabble an' dribble around with wet blankets on the far roof. But it ain't a logical house."

"But we ought to save things!" Jack said.

"If worse comes to worse," Assey said, "we'll salvage silver an' books an' things of the back of a pity that Aaron Frye can't be around to tell us what he treasures the most. You know, I remember once in Wellfleet nearly scorchin' my hide off to save some old pewter plates an' a couple of fiddleback chairs, an' a stack of silver, all for an old aunt of mine when her house burned. An' that woman, she laid me out in lavender. What she wanted, an' what I didn't save, was the old wooden spoon she stirred batter with. There goes the roof—"

The octagonal barn swiftly reduced itself to a mass of charred embers. Without quite understanding why, Peg and Jack found themselves assuming his matter-of-fact and philosophical attitude. Neither of them noticed his preoccupation with the woods around the barn.

"There," Assey said at last, "that's the end of that. Wonder if Frye had insurance?"

"Probably not," Peggy said, "unless Pam thought about it. Assey, why didn't anyone come to see this fire?"

"The other shows is rivin' us too much competition," Assey said. "Well, I guess, this concludes the performance."

"Performance is right!" Peggy interrupted. "Do you realize that we sat—sat, and never lifted a finger? And Assey, how did it start?"

"What a horrid thought!" Assey said, the shadow of a smile playing around the corners of his mouth. "Set? Tah, tach! Why, barns—includin' octagonal barns—they burn down every day. Set? My my, An' there we never lifted a finger, never did a thing, we was s'posed to do. Just twiddled our thumbs. So someone is probably writthin' with disappointment out there. In fact, someone is there. I'm sure. But I'm guessin' about the writthin' part."

"What are you talking about?" Lorne demanded. "What do you mean, someone set the barn on fire? Why? Who? What for?"

"It was a questionin' fire," Assey said. "But it didn't get answered, 'cause there ain't no answer. Now, if you two'll be good enough to hold the fort—"

"Where are you going?" Peg asked.

"I'm goin' to rec'noltra," Assey said. "You an' Jack are herewithin' me, tem, detuties, or somethin'. Anyway, you stay here, you stay put right here, no matter what you think, or feel inspired to do. See?"

The pair nodded. There was something in Assey's voice that forbade any questioning.

"Okay," Assey said, "an' hang onto the Carrs, please, if you have to hang on to their shirt tails."

He stroled out past the smoldering barn to the woods beyond.

What did Assey mean by "a questionin' fire"? Continued tomorrow.

He indicated in a recent report that after treatment by one particular wax, the laboratory pears displayed no visible wilt and had a fine, clear appearance at the end of the storage period. He also found that wax does not interfere with ripening.

The unusual amount of wilt during the past season was general and not due to any specific storage method. It was found, investigation indicated that growing conditions had been peculiar in that much of the fruit did not develop the normal amount of wax and the lentils remained open even after harvest. Fruit in this condition is extremely sensitive to wilt, according to the experiment station, and will wilt even under favorable storage conditions.

Under certain conditions wilt can be reduced by high storage humidities but there is danger in that high humidity is often accompanied by high percentage of decay, according to the professor. There were some

CORVALLIS (Sp.)—Promising results in the use of wax as a protective agent in pear storage was an important finding in research of the past year, according to Prof. Henry Hartman of the agricultural experiment station, Oregon State college.

Prof. Hartman has been conducting extensive research on ripening and storage of pears from Oregon, Washington and California for many years, jointly for the Oregon-Washington-California Pear Bureau and Oregon State college.

## STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



**WANTED:**  
A COLT SIX-SHOOTER TO USE AS A MODEL...  
(Signed) SAMUEL COLT,  
INVENTOR OF THE SIX-SHOOTER...  
COLT ACTUALLY PLACED THIS "AD" IN NEWSPAPERS WHEN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ORDERED 1000 REVOLVERS FOR THE TEXAS RANGERS!  
HE HAD GOLD OR GIVEN AWAY ALL HIS SIX-SHOOTERS WHEN THE ORDER CAME IN...

**FIVE LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET MOST FREQUENTLY USE ARE IN ORDER:**  
E T R I N

**BOTH STOEHER—Woman Game Warden, PATROLS A RIVER SECTION RESERVED EXCLUSIVELY FOR WOMEN!**  
—Brantford River, Conn.—



HAWAIIAN CHILDREN BOBBLIN' IN THE SUMMER—ON GRASS-COVERED "PUNCHBOWL HILL," HONOLULU...

**Colt's Dilemma**  
Samuel Colt, inventor of the famous six-shooter which bears his name, found himself in a very embarrassing position one day when the U. S. government petitioned him to make 1,000 of the revolvers for the Texas Rangers.

Colt didn't own a Colt six-shooter! He had not made them for the past five years—in fact, he was bankrupt.

For a long time Colt had attempted to interest the government in his famous six-shooter, but always he had been refused. The Texas Rangers and the frontiersmen of the Texas plains had adopted the weapon for fighting with Indians and Mexicans, but because they lacked funds

with which to buy them in large numbers, Colt had to give up revolver making.

Then came the outbreak of the Mexican war. The Texas Rangers offered their services to Zachary Taylor and furnished their own mounts and equipment—which included the Colt six-shooter. With the so-called "Texas" model Colt, they soon became a terror to the Mexicans.

In response to demands for more of these weapons, General Taylor requisitioned the government for 1,000 Colt revolvers. They were not to be had, so the government turned to Colt. Strange as it seems, he had none either!

Colt frantically placed advertisements in the newspapers in hopes of securing one of his own guns, but to no avail. Finally he began to produce revolvers, but not to specifications of his old favorite, the "Texas" model.

**Letter Repetition**  
Every written alphabetic language manifests a high degree of constancy in the relative frequency with which its individual letters are employed. From a study of 100,000 letters appearing in telegrams of a commercial and military nature, the letters of the English alphabet were found to occur most frequently in this order: E T R I N O A S D L C H F U P M Y G W V B X K Q J Z. The letter "Z" alone falls in its proper place

cases where wilt was induced by premature harvesting but because years last season began dropping from the trees early, harvesting could not have been delayed.

Results of studies of ethylene gas and its effect in the ripening process indicated that ethylene acts as an activator for the enzymes and is effective only so long as pear contains starch, the report disclosed.

Closing time for Too Late to Classify Ads is 1:30 p. m.

**Vases Puzzle Experts**  
PARIS (P)—Workers in a stone quarry near Nancy found fifteen glass vases. Paris experts, couldn't tell why they were all of the same peculiarly curved design or who made them. Other explorations at the site disclosed the remains of a medieval village, but the experts say the vases antedate the town.

Use Mail Tribune Want Ads.

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEAGUE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

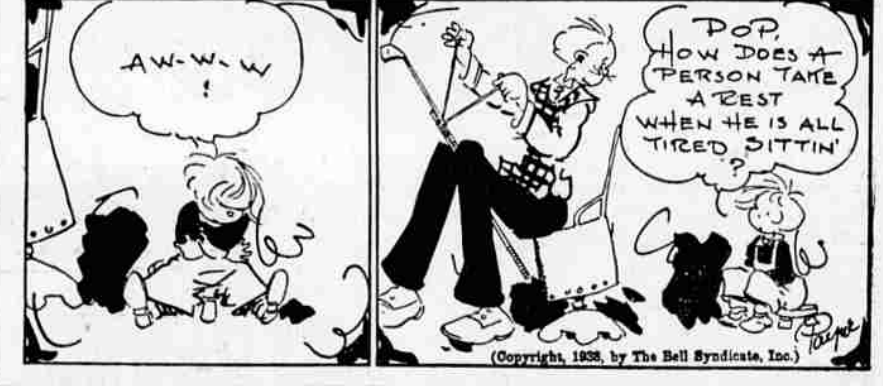


WHEN EDDIE SELZER'S PARENTS WENT OUT FOR THE AFTERNOON WITHOUT, IN SO MANY WORDS, TELLING HIM TO STAY IN BED WITH HIS COLD, HE FELT IT WOULD BE ALL RIGHT TO GET UP AND GO OVER TO THE LOT TO PITCH IN THE GAME. BUT HE HADN'T COUNTED ON THE OPPONENTS BRINGING HIS FATHER ALONG TO UMPIRE

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## S'MATTER POI

By O M PAYNE



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## TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Surprise for Tommy!



## BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Being Cautious



## THE NEBBS—The Informant



## WAX TO PROTECT PEARS IN STORAGE FOUND BY STUDY



## THE NEBBS—The Informant



## THE NEBBS—The Informant



## THE NEBBS—The Informant



## THE NEBBS—The Informant



## THE NEBBS—The Informant



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