

OCTAGON HOUSE

BY PHOEBE ATWOOD TAYLOR



The Story So Far: Asey Mayo, Cape Cod detective, is investigating the murder of Marina Lorne, whose husband's post office mural has aroused Quamnet. She was killed by a left handed blow from her sister's knife. Pam Frye disappears for awhile after hiding a \$50,000 lump of ambergris, then slips back into the tower of Octagon House. Asey knows she is innocent, as well as Tim Carr, boarded with the Fryes. Marina was married to Tim, unknown to Jack Lorne, and also had played around with Roddy Strutt, who is now being "menaced." Before the eyes of Asey, Jack and Peggy Boone, the barn burns down. Realizing the fire was set by someone who wanted to learn the location of the ambergris, Asey prowls around the woods. Both he and Tim are knocked out by an unknown "bigfer." Later they discover that Pam's father and two troopers are missing.

Chapter 28

The Ambergris Enigma

A MORE complete mess, Asey thought as he resumed his seat on the porch, a more peculiar mess, he had never seen. It must have been Roddy Strutt's fellows who were bashing around in the woods. It seemed very likely in view of Carveth's alibi visit, and even though Tim insisted that the man he had caught sight of was not one of the Filipinos.



"Get paper and a pencil! He's tryin' to say somethin'."

On sudden impulse he walked through the house and asked Tim if he knew Roddy Strutt.

"Saw him when he was offering rewards for the murderer," Tim said, "but he wasn't the one I saw in the woods, if that's what you mean."

Asey returned to the back porch. When you sorted it all out, the essentials of the mess were simple enough.

Someone, between nine-thirty and ten-thirty the night before, had stabbed Marina with Pam's knife.

Almost anyone had access to that knife, holding up Mrs. Carr's note to Pam on the back door. Anyone could have twiddled it out. There was very little to be done in the matter of tracing the twicher.

And the time element didn't mean so much. You could ask questions till the cows came home on the Where-were-you-last-night-order. But it was Asey's experience that people, when they set out to commit a murder, usually saw to it that their whereabouts at the time could be explained with great fullness and conviction.

Jack Lorne was lucky enough to be alibied. Tim Carr wasn't, but he believed Tim. Those two were out.

Then you came to the problem of motive.

Practically everyone, he thought, who ever had dealings of any length with Marina wanted to kill her. Just knowing her seemed to be motive enough in itself. All the people in Quamnet vented their wrath about the mural on her. The town was sorry for Jack Lorne, but they blamed and hated Marina.

Coal Bin!

AND then of course there was the ambergris. Someone might well have killed her for that; but why hadn't they taken it with them?

And before anything else happened, Asey decided as he got to his weary feet, he was going to find

out where that ambergris was, and do detective work about it.

"Pam Frye, without any warning, swung up over the porch railing before Asey reached the kitchen door."

"You, huh?" he said, briefly flicking his flashlight at her. "How did you get out?"

"Tree," Pam said. "A leaf from Marina's book. She always used that big maple for sneaking out in her younger days. Asey, I need your help. I've found Father."

"You've found—"

"Yes, all of you kept beating the woods, but no one seemed to think of Jack's house. He's over there."

"Is—he—is he all right?"

"He's got a broken ankle, and his face is smashed up. I think his jaw must be broken. He can't talk. He's in the cellar. I gather he'd been thrown there. He couldn't get up, or well—"

"Just a sec," Asey said. "I'll call Tim. He can phone Cummings and join us there. An' I want to see Jack. He can stay here."

He found Tim sleeping as heartily as Hanson on the front porch. It took a good shaking to awaken Lorne.

Asey snorted with disgust. "Guard!" he said. "Some guards! Mrs. Carr an' her cat'd of done better. Now, Pam, let's get over. An' on the way, will you tell me—before these feet of mine make me forget—where is that ambergris? Where is it, Pam?"

"Coal bin," she said. "Not a very

bright idea, but the best I could think of at the time. Asey, who did this to father? What's going on?"

Barn!

Asey swallowed hard.

"I wish I knew," he said. "But Father is strong!" Pam said. "You mightn't think so to look at him, but he couldn't. Who could have done this?"

"I'm strong," Asey said. "So is Tim. So're those troopers. Tim an' I don't think I ever got hit much harder in all my life."

Pam sighed.

"Anyway," she said, "the ambergris is all right. Old Strongarm hasn't got that. That's something to be thankful for."

Asey couldn't bring himself to the point of telling her that the ambergris was not in the coal bin. He tried to, but he couldn't.

Over in the cellar of the Lorne house they found Aaron Frye. His face and jaw were bruised and swollen, and his face was contorted with pain.

"Don't try to talk," Asey said. "Just wait—Dr. Cummings will be over in a sec, an' then we'll get you up those stairs in a stretcher an' fix you up. I—"

"His ankle looks frightful," Pam said. "Father, don't try to talk! You mustn't—you mustn't! Asey, we've got to—"

"Get some paper," Asey said. "He's yearnin' to say somethin'—get some paper and a pencil."

Pam raced up to Jack Lorne's studio.

With difficulty, Aaron scrawled on the block of drawing paper which Pam had brought.

"I found," he wrote, "amb. in coal bin when I got coal for stove—"

"Where is it now?" Asey asked. "Man, where is it now?"

"In barn," he wrote.

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Thick gloom at Octagon House, tomorrow.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



JAILED AFTER DEATH!
CORPSES WERE BURIED UNDER BARS IN 19TH-CENTURY SCOTLAND TO PROTECT THEM FROM GRAVE ROBBERS!
BODIES WERE FREQUENTLY STOLEN FOR SALE TO MEDICAL SCHOOLS

AUBREY, TEXAS, WAS NAMED BY LOTTERY!
THREE MEN PUT NAMES INTO A HAT AND DREW ONE; WINNER WAS "AUBREY"—THE NAME OF A GIRL FRIEND OF ONE OF THE MEN

THE ROYAL MEASURE—ESTABLISHED AS THE DISTANCE FROM THE NOSE OF KING HENRY I OF ENGLAND TO THE END OF HIS THUMB!

BETTY AND JANICE VERSTEEG, 338 14 and 9, CLIMBED TO THE 14,042-FOOT SUMMIT OF MT. LANGLEY, CALIF., FOLLOWING A TRAIL THEIR PARENTS HAD USED 13 YEARS BEFORE!

Barred Graves
So prevalent was the custom of grave-robbing in early nineteenth-century Scotland that steps had to be taken to protect interred bodies from the macabre maraudings. One of the most interesting relics of this period is the strange "Mort Safe," pictured above. Strange as it seems, it was actually found necessary to inter caskets in such odd, wrought iron prisons to protect them from grave robbers.

Unprotected bodies were quickly disinterred by the wily resurrectionists and sold at a good price to medical schools, which always formed a ready market for cadavers. Bodies more than six weeks old were considered unfit for such trade, so it was customary to unearth the "Mort Safes" after this length of time for use again on a fresh grave.

The King's "Yard"
In this day of precision it is hard to understand how certain common units of measurement came into being. During the Middle Ages almost every town had its own standards of weights and measures.

Italy, as late as the 18th century, had over 200 different units of length called the "foot," all in daily use. No standardization was effected until royal and parliamentary enactments forced the adoption of specific units. Many of these were amusing in themselves: The English yard, for example, was decreed by King Henry I to be the distance from the point of his nose to the tip of his thumb. This was in the year 1101. Previously, a yard measured 36 inches, almost the same length as the present meter. Similarly, a fathom, unit of measuring water depth, originated as the length of a sailor's outstretched arms—six feet. The word means "to embrace." The distance from a man's elbow to his knuckles was called by the ancient Egyptians one "pygmy," giving rise to the name of those small people. The inch in 1224 was standardized as the length of three dry barleycorns, laid end to end.

Tomorrow: Is the Ice Age Over?

Thin Out Wildlife
JERSEYVILLE, Ill. (UP)—Among the deadliest enemies of wildlife can now be numbered the automobile. A count along a 10-mile stretch of state highway near here showed as victims of autos three turtle doves, one cardinal, two woodpeckers, one flicker, a meadow lark, two robins, five rabbits and a possum.

Juvenile Crime Up
LONDON (UP)—American gangster pictures are blamed by juvenile court authorities for the large increase in juvenile crime revealed in the latest criminal statistics for England and Wales. The number of indictable offenders under 17 years of age, it is shown, rose from 20,540 in 1934 to 27,126 in 1937.

Licenses Urged
HELSINKI, Finland (UP)—Pedestrians as well as cyclists and motorists may have to take out licenses if a suggestion put forward by the Abo Chamber of Commerce is adopted. It is proposed that courses in "road culture" be given to walkers and certificates be awarded to those who pass the required tests.

Use Mail Tribune Want Ads.

MINING MEN PLANNING ATTENDANCE AT STATE CONVENTION IN BAKER

It is expected that a number of mining men from here will attend the state-wide mining convention to be held in Baker July 2 and 3. The convention is sponsored by the Eastern Oregon Mining and Mineral Association.

Morning and afternoon sessions will be held Saturday with a lunch at noon and a banquet at 6 in the Hotel Baker. The general sessions will be held in the Elks hall and the public is invited.

The Saturday morning program includes talks by Rex Putnam, state superintendent of public instruction and A. M. Swarley, consulting mining engineer, state department of geology and mineral industries. A gold exhibit may be viewed in the First National bank lobby.

Principal address at the Saturday afternoon session will be given by J. D. Ross, Bonanza dam administrator. Other speakers will be Walter Fellows, on "Fossil Fuel Mining," Earl K. Nixon, on "Mining and

News of 4-H CLUBS

By Kenneth Bendure
C. D. Conrad, 4-H club leader, weighed the calves and sheep of the Elk Creek club recently on the new trailer scales bought for the Jackson county 4-H clubs. The trailer scale is a recent development at the Oregon State college, the Jackson county set being only the fifth made. The stock will be weighed at regular intervals to check on their development.

Two, not previously mentioned, who donated toward the Elk Creek scholarships, were Booth's Jewelry store of Medford and the McLeod Home Extension unit.

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

TAILSPIN TOMMY—In the Enemy's Camp!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Junius Jippen's Surprise!



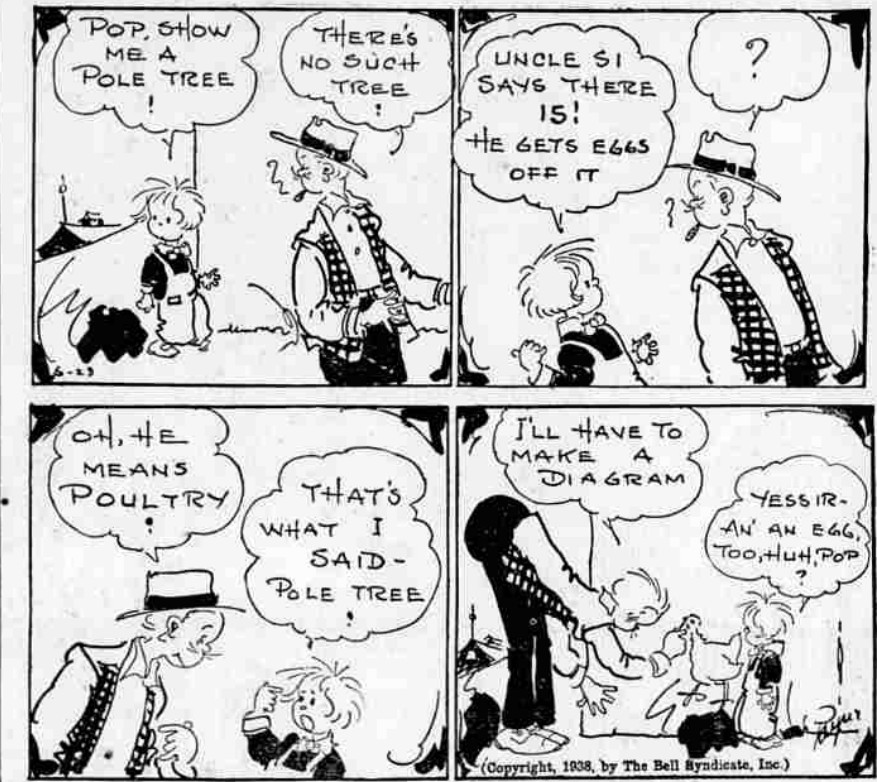
THE NEBBS—Memory Tests



"WHAT'S THAT NUMBER?" By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



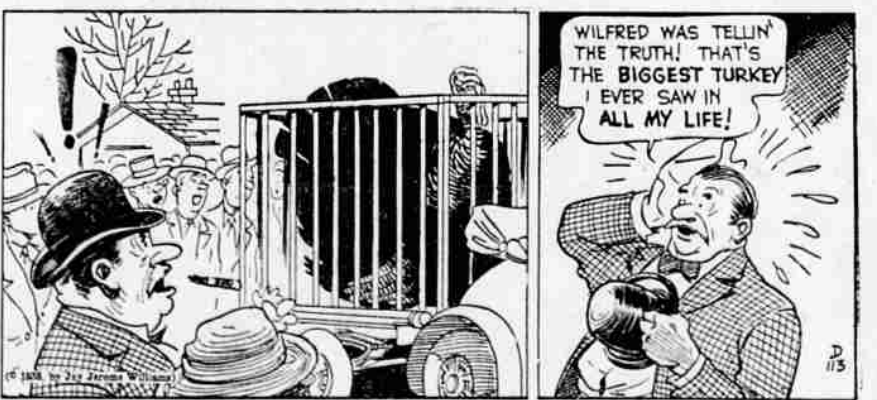
S MATTER POI By C M PAYNE



By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ALGER



By SOL HESS

