THE ARMY POST MURDERS

By Virginia Hanson

The Characters

Katherine Cornish, *myself, visiting Elizabeth on a mid-western Army post.*

Elizabeth, *the colonel's daughter.*

Adam Drew, *a friend.*

Yesterday: *My fiancé, Charlie, is still avoiding me.*

Chapter Six

Under Her Spell

INSIDE the club the musicians did their best to get hot. Anne's tiny feet flew, her short dark curls tumbled forward and she tossed them back. She was pale, her big iris eyes a little glassy. Suddenly she faltered, swayed and reached a groping hand toward Barney.

"Smatter, honey?" he asked quickly, steadying her with an arm around her waist.

"Don't ever—do that—on champagne. I'm a little tight, you know?"

"Just a little, pet," he said soothingly. "We'll take a nice ride in the nice air, shall we?"

She drew away from him, looked back into the clubroom and shivered in the hot, oppressive night. "Get my wrap, darling. I'm going to be cold."

"You're not tight, you're crazy," Barney said scornfully, then scooped her into his arms and bore her down the steps into the darkness. A car door slammed, gravel hailed; the sound of a motor diminished and died.

They had not seen us. I murmured, "Tarzan on the loose again."

Adam did not answer. He was staring into the darkness where they had disappeared. In the half-light his bland, round face looked troubled.

"I don't like it," he said at last, as if he were thinking aloud. "That's girl's headed for trouble."

"With Barney?" I asked in surprise. "I thought he seemed rather steady."

"Don't know anything against him," Adam conceded. "Little too handsome, maybe. But I didn't mean Barney. Maybe he can handle her if she sticks to him. If . . ."

I waited. There was more to come. I could feel Adam making up his mind.

"How old would you say she is?" he asked suddenly.

"I don't know. Twenty, twenty-one?"

"She's eighteen—and she's a drunkard."

"But, Adam! Lots of girls drink."

"Not like Anne Carewe. I know. I'm telling you this because the kid is so completely alone. Her mother is an invalid; her father is a doting old fool. And she hasn't got an honest friend."

"What about Mrs. Shaw? And Elizabeth?"

"Listen. Anne could have had nearly any man on this post. Under that chummy girl-to-girl manner Mrs. Shaw has her claws out. So has Mrs. Orpington."

"But Elizabeth——"

Adam knew what I meant. Elizabeth would never descend to woman-fighting.

"You're right. She'd simply crawl into a shell. I think that's what she has done where Anne is concerned."

'Destroying Herself'

HE was silent for a while. Finally he went on.

"I may as well tell you what everyone else knows. Barney Nelson and Anne split up early in June—nobody knows why—and Barney started taking Elizabeth around. Some said it was a bid for the Old Man's favor. Some said he was punishing Anne for flirting with Charlie Spencer. Some said she only took up with Charlie to lure Barney back. . . ."

A couple strolled out of the clubroom and down the steps. We waited in silence until they were gone. I was thinking furiously. Why was Adam telling me this? Was it to let me know about Charlie? Or was he really concerned about Anne?

The footsteps on the walk grew fainter. Adam's low voice resumed.

"A couple of weeks ago they patched it up. Nobody knows anything about that, either, though there's plenty have tried to find out. Some say things got too serious around the colonel's quarters—Barney was asked his intentions, or some such tripe. Some say Elizabeth turned him down——"

"But why worry about Anne?" I asked patiently. "Seems to me Elizabeth is the one who needs the sympathy—that is, if anyone does. Suppose they both wanted him. Anne got him, didn't she? At least the engagement is announced and that's something. If he's what she wanted—and apparently he is—she'll settle down now and all the old cats will stop scratching."

Adam said doubtfully, "Sounds logical, doesn't it? But I can't get over the idea that something is driving that kid to destroy herself."

I remembered, then, the conversation about her with Elizabeth that afternoon. I told him about it, and he seemed touched. But I could see it was not enough to explain the feeling he had.

The strolling couple returned and we fell silent again. I was rather glad to drop the subject. Anne Carewe was a pirate; it was asking a good bit of women to expect them to feel sorry for her. What did she need with women friends? Even Adam was under her spell—Adam the untouchable, the impervious.

I was swept by a wave of annoyance. What was I doing here anyway? What were they to me, these group-minded individuals inhabiting their strip of park—an island in a sea of cornfields. Had they no privacy in their lives? Was each word, each act, even each thought common property? Were their little lives so bound and tangled by propinquity that they must snap and snarl incessantly like a pack of dogs chained in the same enclosure?

"Why are we dancing here instead of at the Officers' Club?" I asked idly, more to change the subject than because I was interested. "What do they call this, anyway? The Service Club?"

"Yes. It's for the use of the enlisted men—a survival of the war. Used to be the Red Cross building. You notice the floor plan is in the shape of a Maltese cross. It's the only frame building on the post. During the war, and for some time afterward, a Red Cross hostess was in residence here. The post was a general hospital, and the wives and mothers were always coming to visit their boys. You may have noticed that there is a balcony surrounding the dance floor in the center of the cross; off the balcony, in the four wings, there are furnished guest rooms, scarcely ever used now. The hostess lived in one of them."

A Ghost

"WHAT became of her?"

"There's quite a tale about that. After the war all but a few of the hostesses were discharged or transferred to other work. This one stayed on. The hospital was dismantled and the regiment came back. There was no job for her; her pay was cut, eventually she was to have left. She was a queer old thing, from all I've heard—a maiden lady of a certain age; and either she was afraid of starving to death or she was extremely fond of her job. She started a sort of poor-farm plea; so the Post Exchange set aside a sum for her maintenance. But after a few months that, too, failed. There was no place left for her to appeal. So one morning the captain walked in and found her hanging from the balcony just under the regimental colors and the crossed sabers that you see as you enter the door. . . ."

"Suicide?" I asked, revolted.

"Undoubtedly. That touch about the colors proves it. A sort of war-hysteria hang-over. No doubt she felt, with some obscure logic, that she was dying for her country."

"And you have dances here," I marveled.

"Well, not often. Usually we dance at the Officers' Club—in the mess hall, you know. Don't know why the committee had it here tonight. Do it occasionally as a sort of gesture. It's really a recreation room for the enlisted men. They have movies, dances, card parties and the like here. And there's a reading room in the right-hand wing. They didn't take it any too well when the old girl made her last bow; and once in a while the story goes the rounds that somebody has seen her ghost fluttering around on that dark balcony. Then the officers get busy and have a dance here and the story dies down for a while."

"No wonder the guest rooms are seldom used!"

Adam chuckled. "Catch any soldier on this post putting his womenfolk in this building for the night!"

Something moved in the shadows beyond the veranda railing. My heart gave an involuntary lurch.

"Is that you, Katherine?"

It was Elizabeth in her pink shepherdess costume. She was alone.

"I'm going to run home for a few minutes—Father said he might telephone at eleven o'clock. I won't be gone very long, but I thought you might wonder . . ."

My conscience pricked me. I had not really given Elizabeth a thought for the past hour. And she must be having a rotten time.

"I'll go with you," I said promptly.

Adam, on his feet, spoke almost simultaneously. "I'll get my car."

But she waved us both aside. "Please, no," she said firmly. "My car is here, and I slipped out the side door from the powder room so no one would bother. Please—I won't permit you."

Nor would she. Anxious as I was to cease encumbering Adam, to free him from his solitary vigil by my side, I found myself waiting on the veranda while he saw her to her car, listening to the rather sad music of the soldier orchestra, watching through a convenient window the very wan dancers in their uninspired costumes.

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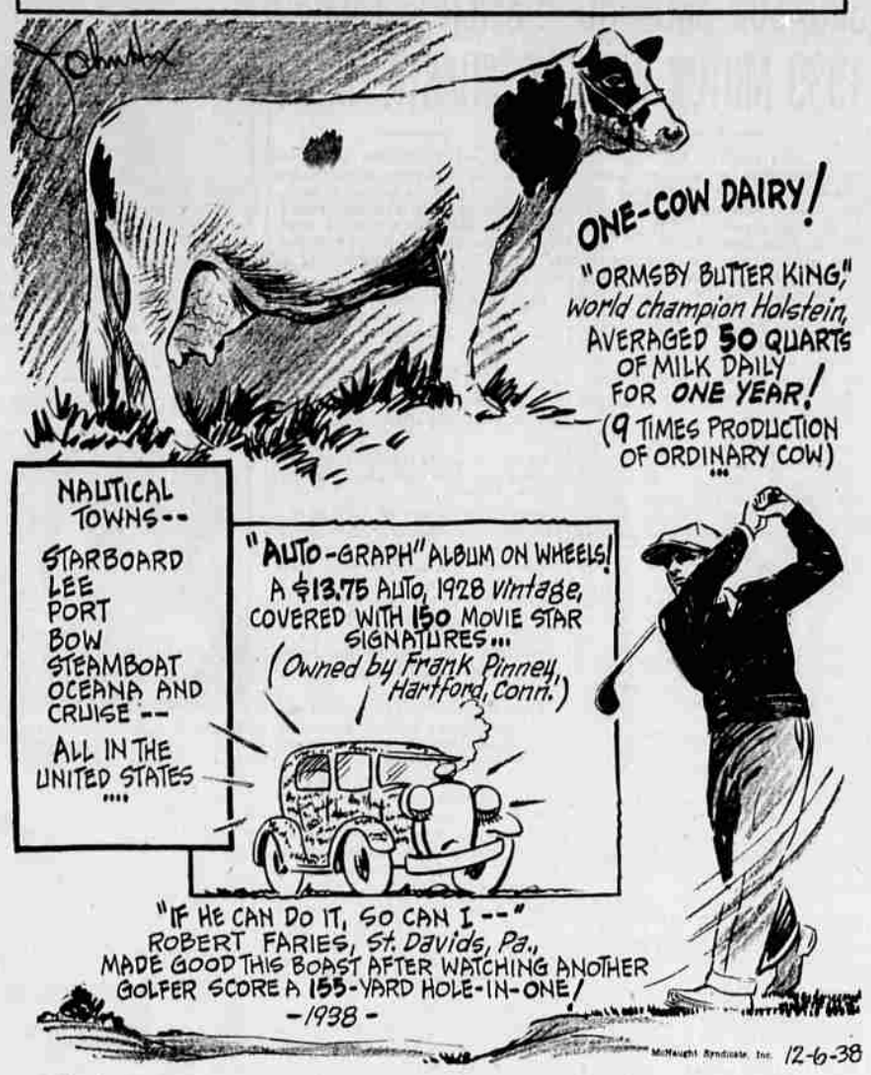
Tomorrow: Death walks the post.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



Nine-In-One Cow

Nine cows in one is Ormsby Butter King, champion milk-producing Holstein owned by the Carnation Farms of Seattle, Wash. Strange as it seems, her daily production of 50 quarts of milk, five pounds of butter, is nine times that of the ordinary cow.

On Feb. 12, 1936, Ormsby Butter King completed an official one-year test which showed 38,606 pounds of milk and 1,402 pounds of butter for the 365 days. This broke the 16-year-old record of Segis Pietertje Prospect (Ormsby Butter King's great-grandaunt's sister) which was the first cow to produce over 18,500 quarts of milk a year.

She of course eats more than most cows, consuming every day 30 pounds of alfalfa, 30 pounds of beets, 20 pounds of silage, 20 pounds of grain, and 35 gallons of water—plus an hour's pasturage.

Hole-In-One On a Bet

Robert Faries, St. Davids, Pa., golfer, stood at the 155-yard sixth hole one day last June and watched O. A. Soderberg score an ace. "Well, if he can do it, so can I," Faries said, half in earnest—and he called his shot right. Stepping up to the tee, he let go a long high drive that plopped into the cup for another ace.

"Auto-Graph" Album

Frank Pinney's 10-year-old jalopy was worth only $13.75 when he drove it to Hollywood, but now he values it at $1,000 because of scores of movie stars' autographs he collected on it, painted with white lead for permanency.

Tomorrow The hurricane eggs.

Drop Lindbergh In T.W.A. Slogan

KANSAS CITY, Dec. 6.—(AP)—Literature of Transcontinental and Western Air, Inc., appeared today without the slogan, "The Lindbergh Line" and airline officials met with a blunt "no comment" all questions regarding the deletion.

Proof sheet of the 1939 T.W.A. calendar show the slogan has been replaced by a new one.

Although Col. Charles A. Lindbergh, former technical advisor for T.W.A., has not been associated with the airline since 1934, the company had continued to utilize his name in the slogan.

Cite Judge's Wife In Smuggling Plot

NEW YORK, Dec. 6.—(AP)—Mrs. Elma N. Lauer, wife of State Supreme Court Justice Edgar J. Lauer, was indicted today for smuggling and conspiracy to smuggle.

Named with her in the bill was Albert N. Chaperau, described as a commercial representative for the consul general of Nicaragua.

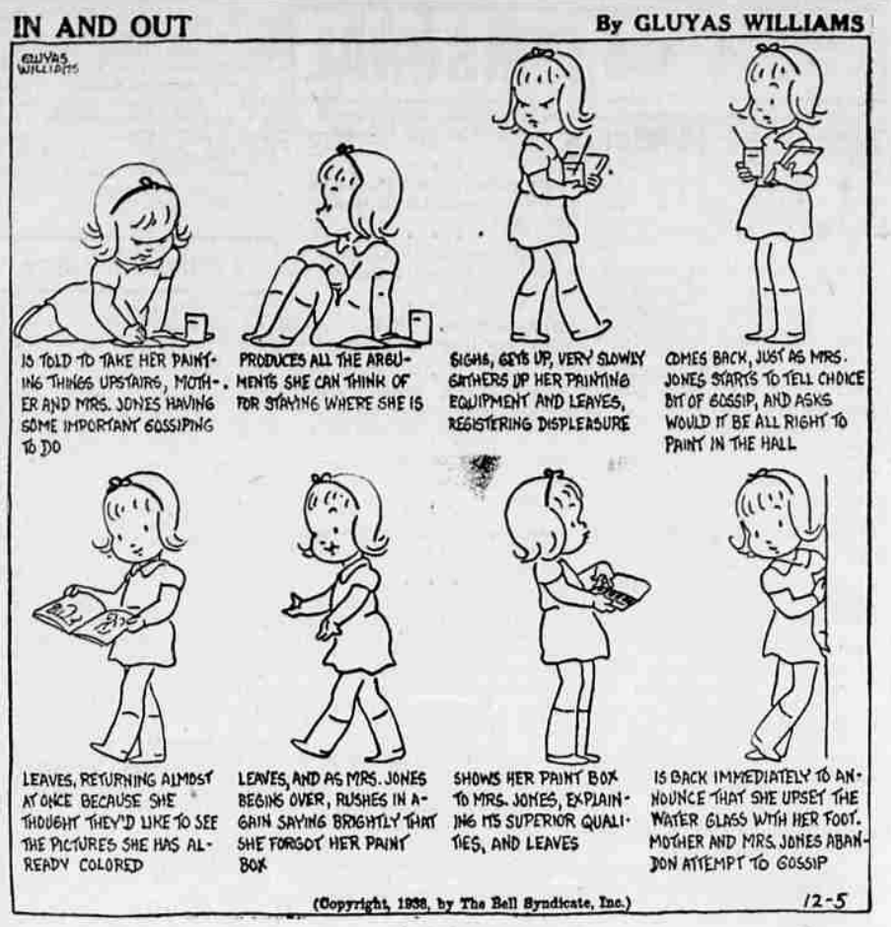
Chaperau was charged in addition with making use of a fraudulent passport and making false statements in connection with the document.

Customs agents raided the Lauer apartment in Park avenue October 27 in search of feminine finery alleged to have been smuggled into the country.

Use Mail Tribune Want Ads.

IN AND OUT

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Mystery of the Amphibian!

By HAL FORREST

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—No Answer!

By EDWIN ALGER

THE NEBBS—Under Suspicion

By SOL HESS

FEDERAL ROAD AID FIXED FOR OREGON

WASHINGTON, Dec. 6.—(AP)—Oregon's share in 1940 federal highway aid will approximate $2,102,000, the bureau of public roads disclosed today.

The state's apportionment for the current fiscal year, 1939, ending next June 30, amounted to $3,023,940.

Officials said that on November 1 some 121 miles of road and one grade crossing were either under construction, under contract or approved for construction.

This work, they said, would ultimately cost about $2,866,922, and the government's share would aggregate $1,890,318.

In addition officials said there was about $3,126,095 remaining in the Oregon account for use on projects programmed but for which plans were not yet approved.

25,315 BIRDS BAGGED IN TULE LAKE REGION

KLAMATH FALLS, Dec. 6.—(AP)—A total of 8,601 hunters, nearly twice as many as a year ago, bagged 25,315 game birds, 10,504 more than in 1937, on shooting grounds adjacent to the Tule lake migratory waterfowl refuge during the six-week season which closed last Monday, U. S. Biological Survey Agent C. O. Fairchild reported today.

The 25,315 birds included 11,666 geese and 13,351 ducks.

SALEM, Dec. 6.—(AP)—The board of control agreed today to cooperate with the Willamette Valley Lumbermen's association in conducting an investigation to determine whether hogged fuel could be used in the capitol heating plant now under construction. Present plans call for the use of oil.