

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.
Charlie Spencer, my fiancé.

Yesterday, Anne Carewe is murdered during the balloon dance.

Chapter Eight
Capable Of Murder

SOMEONE was breathing hard at my shoulder. I turned. "Charlie!" I whispered. Fear shot through me and left me trembling.

His face was paper white under the golden down that covered it like peach fuzz, and his odd, yellow cat eyes had the brilliance of topaz.

"She's dead," he said suddenly in a shockingly ordinary voice. The crowd panicked. Some woman began to laugh. Doc Moore glanced up from his examination, said something in a low voice, and Adam, with courteous, relentless finality, forced us all out of the room.

"Everyone wait, please," he directed and closed the door. "Quick, someplace where we'll be alone," I whispered to Charlie.

He merely stared at me stupidly. I took his unresisting hand and hurried him across the floor to the reading room. For the moment we had it to ourselves.

"Listen, this is serious," I said, trying to fix his wandering, feverish gaze. "Listen, Charlie—please pay attention to what I am saying. You realize this is murder, don't you?"

The vacant yellow eyes looked back at me impersonally. "Well, what of it?" he asked crisply; and I saw what I had missed before, that he was very drunk.

In that moment of horror it was possible for me to believe anything. I remember looking him over quickly for suspicious signs or bulges. He was untidy—his tawny hair was matted, there were wrinkles in his white mess jacket and slacks; but there was no suspicion of a gun on his lean, tailored form.

"All right, Charlie. I just wanted to make sure you remember you were with me in this room when the shooting took place."

Maybe I was a fool, but at that moment I thought I had to get him out of it. I'd take a chance on fixing it with Adam.

"With you? I don't believe I was," said Charlie with a flash of intelligence.

I sighed in assumed impatience. "I was afraid you were too tight to remember. I suppose you've forgotten I asked you not to take that last drink?"

"Right! Nothing of the sort. Of course I remember. The trouble with you, Red, you're a rube. Cut out to be an old maid."

And with that distinctly uttered pleasantries Charlie Spencer dropped on the leather divan and went instantly to sleep.

I stood looking at him for a moment in baffled silence. There was no telling what he had done—and no chance of finding out from him now. It seemed to me he was perfectly capable, bolstered by a few drinks, of killing a girl to keep another man from having her. But had he? And how could I find out?

A Man-Hunting Weapon
I TURNED out the light in the reading room and pushed the door nearly to, hoping that he would not be found for a while. Then I slipped through another door I found unlocked which opened direct from the reading room on the strip of side yard between the Service Club and the chapel.

The club stood back from the street a short distance like a private residence, and the block was lined with parked cars. Avoiding the front of the building, I cut across in front of the darkened chapel, and hurried along the sidewalk, searching for Charlie's car. A passing sentry eyed me curiously. I thought, before he sauntered on.

Under the next street light I found the roadster that had been Charlie's pride and joy for the summer before, when he was on graduation leave.

I slid behind the wheel, conscious of a homelick pulse. There was a check for my first story. Beside me, Charlie, looking like a new-hatched chick in his spangly officer's uniform. The summer-school gang; campus parties; miles and miles along the lake in the roadster with Eileen and her

current youth singing like angels in the rumble seat. A good summer, our last at home. It was all changed now: Dad rambling through southern France on his sabbatical; Charlie's father transferred to Los Angeles, their house sold; Eileen singing determinedly against the incessant clatter of my typewriter and the periodic, devastating typhoon of the elevated outside our window. And Charlie—Charlie drinking himself out of the picture because a girl named Anne Carewe had got herself engaged to another man. And Anne Carewe lying on a chaise longue with a bullet hole in her back...

I remembered his conversation with Elizabeth that afternoon and ran my hand along the back of the driver's seat. The gun was there, wedged in behind the cushion, the grip where he could put his hand on it.

I drew it out and looked at it with the distrust I always feel for pistols. I had shot Charlie's twenty-two rifle when we were kids, but this was different—an ominous, heavy thing, a man-hunting weapon.

It was 1d; but I didn't know how long it would stay warm after it was fired. I didn't know how to use it, or if it had been fired. I didn't know anything about the thing except that I was going to get rid of it for a while.

I considered. It would not do just to throw it away somewhere in the dark; for eventually it would be found and traced to Charlie—the numbers, or something, were registered. I knew. Where, then, could I hide it?

The only place I could think of was my suitcase in Elizabeth's guest room.

Fantastic Thought
THE thought of Elizabeth brought me up with an icy shock. She must be still at home, waiting for her call. She ought to be told about the tragedy. I would make that an excuse for my actions.

The keys were in the car. I was relieved but not surprised to find them. Charlie was casual about such things.

We warmed to each other like old friends, Charlie's roadster and I. The quarter mile or so from one end of the plain to the other vanished behind us like a thread of smoke and we drew up in front of Colonel Wright's quarters.

I was conscious of a pang of disappointment. Elizabeth must have gone back to the party. Her car was not in sight. Well, I would go in, hide the gun and leave. I could tell myself I had been looking for her.

The knob turned under my hand—doors are never locked on a post—and I entered softly, remembering Annie's promise to be in early.

The lights were on in the front of the house, but I saw no one as I slipped through the hall and up the creaky stairs. I found my suitcase in the dark, removed the pistol from the capacious sleeve of the mandarin coat where I had been carrying it, and buried it under some lingerie. Then I locked the suitcase and put the key in my evening bag. That much, at least, was done.

But on a way downstairs a disturbing thought came to me. How long had Elizabeth been gone? Could she prove an alibi for the time of the shot?

I tried to dismiss the fantastic thought, but it kept coming back, and with it Adam's recital of Bar—Nelson's love angle, as the tabloids would have phrased it. Not that I believe Elizabeth capable of murder. The thing, I repeated, was fantastic. But what about the gossip-mongers? Wouldn't they be the first to scream "Motive"?

And so, with the high-minded intention of proving an alibi for her, I snooped. There may have been some excuse for my meddling in Charlie's affairs. There was none for what I did now.

The telephone was on the colonel's desk. I entered the den, closed the door and spoke softly into the transmitter. A man's voice answered me—the soldier operator of the private exchange.

"I'm expecting a long-distance call," I said in a voice I tried to make casual. "Can you tell me if anyone has tried to get this number in the past half-hour?"

I was prepared to hear that Omaha had called, whereupon I would ask the time of the call. But the operator dashed my plans.

"No, ma'am. There's been no long-distance calls tonight."

I replaced the instrument, regretting my impulse, trying to dispel my awakening suspicions with the reminder that Elizabeth had said her father might telephone. One thing was certain, however. Not even to Adam would I concede what I had learned.

I opened the door of the den, and there, at the far end of the hall, framed in the outer doorway, was Elizabeth.

She looked startled at sight of me, and I thought she even caught her breath.

Monday: The bullet.

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 SKYWAY TWINS—ANNESE AND AGNES PUGH, twin airline stewardesses, HAVE FLOWN 1,000,000 MILES BETWEEN THEM!

AMERICA'S \$150,000,000-A-YEAR RAISIN INDUSTRY SPRANG FROM A SINGLE TWIG OF A SPANISH GRAPEVINE BROUGHT TO CALIFORNIA FROM MEXICO IN 1769!

Cloud Sisters
With eight years and 1,000,000 miles of airline service to their credit, Annese and Agnes Pugh are the only twin sisters to hold jobs as skyway stewardesses. After becoming a nurse, Agnes five years ago joined United Air Lines as a stewardess. Two years later Annese followed her sister's example and took to the air with American Air Lines. Recently they added up their mileage and found they had covered 1,000,000 miles between them.

\$150,000,000 Twig
Strange as it seems, from the single twig of a Spanish grape vine, brought into California from Mexico by Franciscan padres in 1769, sprang this country's entire raisin growing industry—a \$150,000,000 a year affair. Planted at the Mission of San Diego, the vine grew luxuriously. In two years it yielded fruit and provided cuttings which were planted at other missions as the padres preached north. One of these original vines, planted by the Franciscans at Mission San Gabriel in 1775, still produces at the rate of five tons a year. In 1771 the padre blessed and shipped from California the first keg of wine sent from this country to the Vatican in Rome. Cuttings from France, Turkey, Persia and other countries were introduced into the United States when the success of the Spanish vine was apparent, and today crop yields of some three billion pounds are produced each year.

WPA Employment Ebbs During Week
WASHINGTON, Dec. 8.—(AP)—Works Progress Administration unemployment rolls declined 33,088 during the week ended December 3. Workers on that date totaled 3,183,418, compared with 3,216,506 for the week ended November 29. The reduction was not felt in Oregon. On the contrary WPA enrollment increased there from 18,393 to 18,498.

SHADY COVE CLUB TO SPONSOR OASIS DANCE
SHADY COVE, Dec. 8.—(Sp.)—The Shady Cove Community club will sponsor an old-time dance Saturday night at the Oasis in Eagle Point. Refreshments will be served and the public is invited.

BEAVERTON, Ore., Dec. 8.—(AP)—Beaverton this week selected W. E. McCloskey mayor and Homer Wilson recorder.

U. S. dog population is 15,000,000.

Yesterday James' apparent failure to make church donations cause "loss in support" for benevolent organizations. "And as we weaken our spiritual institutions we weaken America," he added.

James Roosevelt said in a statement at Hollister, Cal., he actually did make such contributions but usually he did not claim deductions for them. He said if Mr. Anderson was interested, he would be glad to inform him of his donations.

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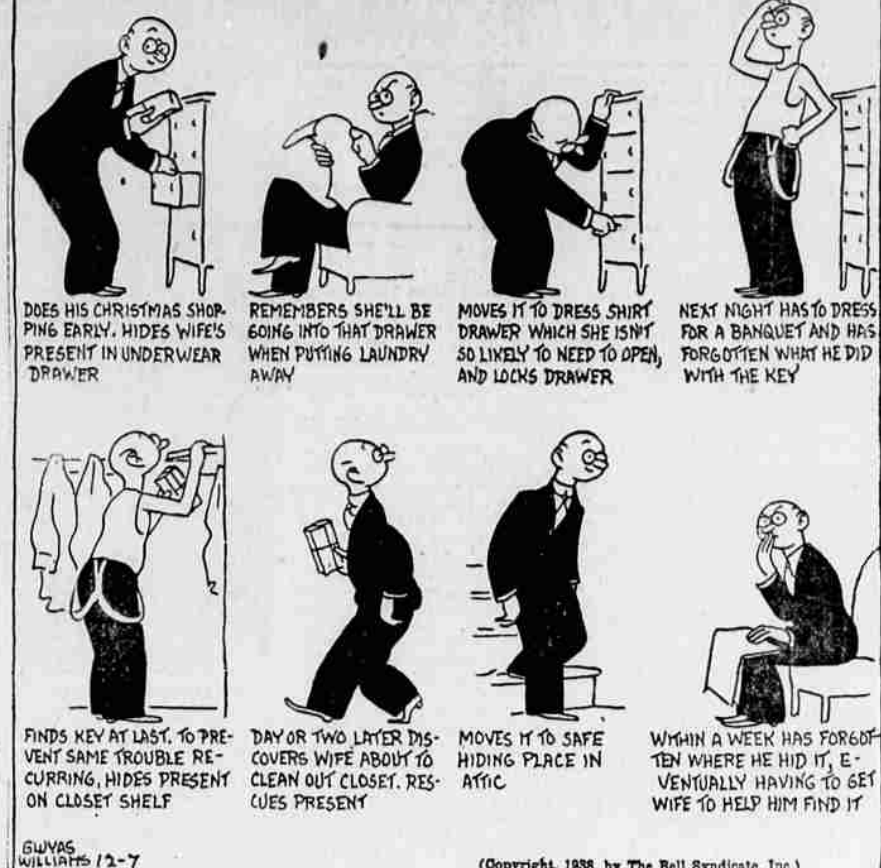
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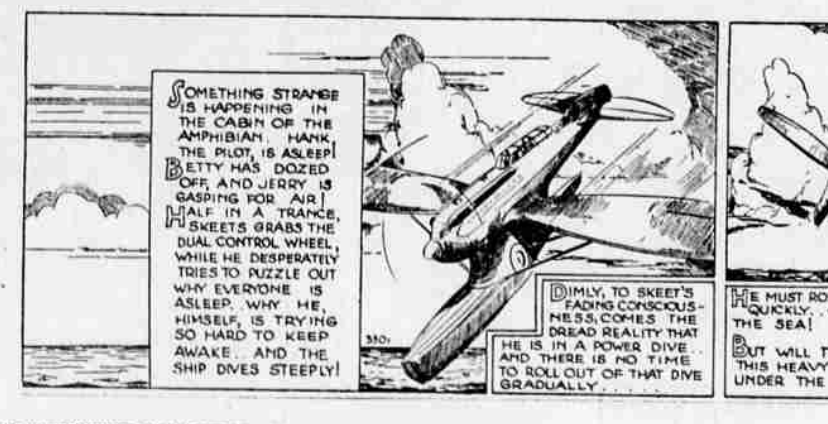
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MATTER POT By C. M. PAVN



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TAILSPIN TOMMY—On Wings of Disaster!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Second Request?



THE NEBBES—Foxy Steve



By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ALGER



By SOL HESS



CANBY WOULD USE BONNEVILLE JUICE PASTOR SAYS JIM IS BAD EXAMPLE

PORTLAND, Dec. 8.—(AP)—Canby applied to the Bonneville dam authority today for 250 kilowatt-years of Columbia river electrical energy. J. D. Ross, dam administrator, estimated the city would pay approximately \$1.1 million for the power. Ross said the plan would cut the city's cost in half as well as provide income to reduce the city's debt.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 8.—(AP)—The Rev. Howard Stone Anderson, Congregational pastor here, said today unless James Roosevelt included his church contributions in his income tax returns, he would be considered "a bad object lesson to the country."