

THE ARMY POST MURDERS

By Virginia Hanson

The Characters
Katherine Cornish, myself, visiting Elizabeth on a mid-western Army post.
Elizabeth, Colonel Wright's daughter.
Adam Drew, acting commanding officer.

Chapter 18
On The Wrong Track

EXCITEMENT burned in Adam's eyes.
"Well? I'm listening."
"Why, I was in the reading room, here, this afternoon, polishing up for the party. I'd come over to make sure there were enough dishes for the ice cream. That stuff must be melted to soup by now! They were to deliver it at eleven. The balloon dance was to have been the last before the intermission."

Adam made a gesture of impatience.
"Get on with it. What time were you over here?"
"Right after the polo game. Must have been between five-thirty and six. There's usually two or three soldiers in the reading room, but they'd cleared out. The place was empty as a tomb."

Adam paused, shivered. "Tomb is right. . . .
"Well, as I said, I was polishing up a bit in here when I heard what I took to be a pistol shot. I tore to the reading room door—it was shut—and I peeped in.

"Barney was standing in the entryway with a box of colored light bulbs in one hand and the pieces of one at his feet. I said, 'What was that noise?'
"He said, sort of weak, 'It did make a noise, didn't it? Must be the arched roof. I dropped a bulb.'

"But when I got up to him I could see his face was white and he was shaking so the bulbs all danced and rattled. And I could smell burnt powder.

"Well, that was his story, and he stuck to it. But I think somebody was gunning for him and he knew it. And that would mean—

"That somebody got the wrong person tonight. Did you see anyone? Outside, I mean?"
"I never noticed. There were ears passing—the polo game was just over. As I say, I never noticed."

"He would have been an easy mark there in the doorway, Adam mused, "he was all in white. Suddenly I remembered something that time," he said. "What was the name of the picture with pictures of Elizabeth? Elizabeth, determinedly alone, leaving the club before Taps; Elizabeth, an hour ago, standing in her own front door looking sick with what 'Horror? Disappointment? Fear?' And now—Elizabeth taking me tactfully but firmly home from the polo game, leaving me there and propelling her shiny little car back past the long row of officers' quarters past the Service Club, past the chapel, past the Post Exchange, and out of sight among the small, orderly row of quarters known as Noncoms' Row."

And Shaw had said there were ears passing. Passing the Service Club.
I wanted to deny those suspicions. I did deny them. I was ashamed of them. I despise people who are always looking for evil where only good appears.

Yet the recurring pictures were important; they had real significance if I could have puzzled it out. But I didn't know them well enough—the principals in that night's tragedy. And even Adam, when, toward morning, I told him all the things that were troubling me, was slow to see where they pointed.

Horrible Understanding

I TURNED my thoughts resolutely in a new direction. There was still Shaw, the man who had tried to spoil Swede's beauty. I hadn't been able to fit that in with the murder of Barney's fiancée. But suppose the killer had intended the bullet for Barney?

We had only Shaw's word that that afternoon when the first shot was fired—if it was a shot. Couldn't he have fired at Barney from in front of the building, run around the side and in at the door of the reading room? It would be a smart move to tell the story first, before Adam could hear it from Barney's lips.

It was easy to discount his wife's story of refusing to marry Barney. No girl in her senses would have made such a choice between the two men. A more likely surmise would be that she had made a desperate play for Barney, only to find that he had been amusing himself at her expense—and Shaw's. She was probably still in love with him, that would account for her turning

against Anne. And wasn't that a motive for shooting her?
On the other hand, why would Shaw, at this particular juncture, decide to put Barney out of the way? Anne was doing that for him.
I had floundered into confusion again. Barney or Anne? And strong motives for the death of either. Against my will my thoughts circled back to their starting point. Strong motives. Elizabeth, if she loved Barney. Charlie. . . .
But I refused to think of that.

Adam was pacing the floor with quick, nervous strides, his open face mirroring indecision.
"Who's that? I'm on the wrong track—I've been asking all the wrong questions." He frowned thoughtfully at Shaw. "Who hated him? Who on this post would be glad to see him dead?"

Shaw turned a seaside green. The man who tried to spoil Swede's beauty.
He moistened his lips and I saw them form a word. Charlie. He was going to bring that up again. But a sudden thought, as visible as a shadow on his face, intervened and he brushed aside Adam's question with one of his own.

"Where is Swede, by the way?"
Something in his tone arrested Adam. The two men stared at each other in rather horrible understanding.

"You're thinking . . ." Adam's voice trailed off. He crossed the room to a crowded hatrack, reached down from the top hook a white uniform cap.
"Who—you think the murderer might try again?" Shaw's voice was a little shrill. "Adam—wait! Where are you going? What about me?"

Adam paused at the side door I had used more than an hour before.
"I'm going to bachelor quarters after Nelson. I'll either bring him back here or set somebody on to guard him, just in case. You stay here. I'll be right back. Look—have Mrs. Orpington in and see what you can get out of her. It probably won't be much, but keep her until I get back."

It was not much. Inside of five minutes Shaw was squirming and by the end of that time Lou Orpington was asking the questions and Shaw was on the defensive. To do him justice, she learned little enough from him, and her tongue sharpened.

A Woman in White

"WELL! This certainly . . . sending a boy to do a man's work. Kind of in a daze, aren't you? Suppose I did know something. I'd better not tell you—just in case I forget it before Adam gets back. Guess I'll just wait around."

She settled back comfortably and gazed at the ceiling, her thin red lips pressed tightly together, her long bare legs nonchalantly crossed. Shaw looked at her with baffled fury in his eyes.
"Who do you know anything you'd better tell it before something else happens."

"Something else," she murmured, "and a better guess than I've got is that the killer's eyes bristled thought was active. 'I see—you think the killer was after Barney.'"

Either she was very quick witted or she did know something. For the first time she betrayed the signs of nervousness. The high-arched foot in the silver sandal that revealed her scarlet-tipped toes began to lash like the tail of an angry cat.

"I don't believe it," she said defiantly, but her cheeks had paled around their spots of rouge. "It's that girl. She was looking for trouble and she got it. Everybody's crazy about Barney—he's a prince. If he wasn't she'd never have got him." She shut her lips tight on this.

"But you do see that you should tell what you know. Time may be important," Shaw wheedled.
"Fiddlersicks! If I knew anything, don't you suppose I'd have told it an hour ago?"

"But you said—

"I said if I knew anything, I don't. I've got good eyes and I keep them open, that's all. You've had us much chance as I have. You've seen Anne Carewe, haven't you? You've seen her parents? Well?"

And that was all she would say. I don't know what made me look over my shoulder. The long lower flight of the stairway where I was sitting was in semidarkness. But the light from the lounge were reflected upward from the central well of the building and illuminated the landing where the stairs turned left about three steps from the top.

A woman was standing there—a woman in white with floating draperies. Her head was back, her face white and contorted, and one arm hung limp at her side. But with the other she was making fantastic gestures. Fist clenched, she was doubling and straightening it at shoulder level, as if she were engaged in weird calisthenics—or as if she were pushing something desperately back that threatened her from just beyond the turn of the stairs.

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Tomorrow: The girl from the train.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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Telephoning Your "Voice"
Strange as it seems, no one has ever heard your voice over a telephone, and you have never heard anyone else's. What is heard is purely mechanical reproduction of the voice.
In making a telephone call to San Francisco from New York, for example, your actual voice travels only the distance from your mouth to the mouthpiece of the transmitter.
In turn, the transmitter changes air vibrations of your voice into electrical impulses, and it is these that travel the 3000-mile distance to San Francisco. There the electrical impulses are again changed into air vibrations, which reach the listener's ear in a fair reproduction of your true voice.
Thus the telephone does not carry your own voice thousands of miles, as popularly supposed, in making long distance calls; only an imitation of it covers the distance.
High-and-Dry Pier
Because of the shallowness of its harbor, Broome, Western Australian seaport, found it necessary to extend a pier almost a mile out into the ocean to accommodate large ships.
At high tide, ships are able to tie alongside of this pier some 5000 feet from land. At low tide, however, quite a different picture is presented. The ship that formerly had been floating is then left "high and dry" about 100 yards from the water!
Due to the heavy tidal change and the natural shallowness of the region, the water advances and recedes over a mile with the flood and ebb tides.

NOVEMBER RAINFALL HEAVY IN 'VILLE
JACKSONVILLE, Dec. 14.—(Sp.)—There were 4.08 inches of rainfall in Jacksonville during November, according to figures released today by Emil Britt, voluntary observer. Greatest fall was on November 1, with 1.95 inches. There was one-quarter inch of snowfall on the 10th.
Mean temperature for the month was 48.85; mean minimum, 32.4. Coldest days were the 12th and 22nd, with lows of 21 degrees.
Precipitation since September 1 is 3.10 inches, far below the 11.57 inches which fell during the same period last year.
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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Whose Hand?



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Cause for Remembrance!



THE NEBBS—Going Away



SUBURBAN HEIGHTS By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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S MATTER POE By O M PAYNE



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GIRLS' SCHOOL FOUNDER DIES OF HEART ATTACK

PALO ALTO, Calif., Dec. 14.—(AP)—Miss Catherine Harker, who founded the Miss Harker School for Girls here in 1902, died at her home as a result of a heart attack last night. She was born in Portland, Ore., a member of a pioneer Oregon family, and previously taught at Mills college in Oakland, Calif. She was a graduate of Vassar. Survivors include a sister, Miss Sara D. Harker, associated with the school.

TOMORROW: Does Finland owe the United States a war debt?

By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ALGER



MILK BOTTLE PATENT EARNS HUGE RETURN

WASHINGTON, Dec. 14.—(UP)—President Roosevelt's monopoly investigating committee today heard evidence purporting to show that a Hartford, Conn., firm which monopolizes patents for manufacture of milk bottles earned \$46,479,926 from its patents alone during the past 15 years.
F. G. Smith, president of the Hartford-Empire company and first vice president of the committee, inquiry into the effects of government patent policies on monopolistic growth disclosed under questioning that his firm not only controls the milk bottle patents, but also has a monopoly on patents for one of two methods used to wash bottles.

MRS. SANTA CLAUS, INC TO HELP NEEDY YOUNG

DENVER, Colo., Dec. 14.—(UP)—Incorporation papers for Mrs. Santa Claus, Inc., with the purpose of providing gifts for needy children, were on file today with the Colorado secretary of state.
Mrs. June H. Deets, Denver matron, filed the papers because "although Mrs. Santa Claus has been doing all right the last few hundred years, I think she might have been more attentive to needy and underprivileged children."
The venture has as its goal, Mrs. Deets told Secretary of State George H. Saunders, the attempt to make Mrs. Santa Claus "be real in the minds of children over the six years of age to the present Santa Claus."