

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.

Yesterday: Adam dashes out to see if Barney is safe. While he is gone a strange woman appears on the balcony.

Chapter 14

The Girl From The Train

IT SEEMED to me that she had been trying to attract my attention. But whether or not she was now aware of me I could not tell. Suddenly she staggered on one step and seemed to fall out 'sight. After the first icy shock of horror, when I was unable to scream, remembering the poor soul who had hanged herself, I clamped one hand over my mouth and sat there shivering violently, trying to get hold of myself and be sensible. However much she might appear to be an apparition, she had to be flesh and blood. I reminded myself that there were guest rooms of the balcony which, Adam had said, were seldom occupied. But seldom did not mean never.

I was positive she was not one of the guests at the hop. None of them had been dressed like that—all in floating white. I began to shiver again. But if she had been up there all evening, if she were the relative 'some enlisted man and occupying one of the guest rooms, she might know something, might even have witnessed the shooting.

It would not do for me to summon anyone else. I must follow her alone. I must at least keep her presence secret until Adam could talk to her.

Before my good resolution could weaken I slipped my notes under the stair rug and climbed upward as fast as my shaky knees would permit.

She was lying partially on the stairway, as if she had fallen forward just before she reached the top—a flesh-and-blood woman in a white nightgown and robe. Her body was limp as an old rag thrown down, and when I could bring myself to touch it, to turn the face upward to the light, I saw that it was so flushed with blood as to be almost purple, and there were flecks of foam on the lips.

To my untutored eyes it looked like suffocation or poisoning.

And then, after the first wave of blackness had been fought off and I could see again, I recognized her. It was the girl from the train.

Somehow I got past her and onto the balcony, somehow I edged my way along to the opposite side of the central well without being seen by any of the huddling groups below. There was another stairway that I had noticed leading up from the powder room. I stood at the head of it and listened until I was sure there was no one below. And when I reached the foot of it I found I was still whispering to myself, "I won't scream, I won't scream!"

There was an outside door that corresponded to the one in the reading room—the one Elizabeth had used to slip out unseen. I hurried around the building in the darkness until I could look in through the reading-room window. Tubby, Shaw and Mrs. Orpington were still glowering at each other. Adam had not returned.

Where would I find him? He had gone for Barney—to the Officers' Club where the bachelors had rooms. I started in pursuit and met him returning, his long legs striding purposefully toward the row of parked cars.

Key To The Murder

I REACHED him, clung to him and poured out my story. He put his hand over mine where it rested on his arm and the touch was warm and comforting. It was demoralizing to shake so.

"Good girl," he said quietly. "The fewer people know about this, the better. Maybe—someone—will give it away. I'll go up and look over the situation. You take my car—or Charlie's—and go for Doc Moore. Barney is at the hospital too; the orderly at the club couldn't keep him in bed. Tell him I want to see him."

I took Charlie's car again; he wouldn't be needing it for a while. And as I drove a thousand questions raced through my mind, seeking answers I could not produce.

Most urgent of these—the identity of the strange girl—tantalized me because I had been so near to solving it on the train. I had fancied that I had seen her before and had dismissed it as a chance resemblance. But had the resemblance been chance? Was it a fam-

ily one—and to someone on this post?

I found that I did not believe she was the wife or sister of an enlisted man. For one thing, her clothes were too expensive. For another, she had undoubtedly identified Charlie's ring. And what had Adam said?

"Catch any soldier on this post putting his women-folk in this building for the night!"

The line of reasoning was not strong, but it intensified my growing feeling that to solve the identity of that girl would be to find a key to the murder of Anne Carrawe.

As often happens when you try to watch your subconscious at work, mine retired into a subcellar and put out the light. Even the remembered image of the girl as she sat across the aisle from me on the train faded from my mind and left me staring at that contorted magenta mask which bore no resemblance to anything living.

Horror was riding with me. I spun the little car crazily around a corner and saw welcome lights ahead.

The hospital at Fort Havens is at the same end of the post as the commanding officer's quarters, but beyond and well away from the other buildings and the main road. I had been there that afternoon, but not inside the big brick building.

I ran up the short flight of steps and through the heavy double doors, skidded to a stop on the highly waxed-linoleum floor and looked about me. The odor of formaldehyde and a hushed and breathless quiet enveloped everything.

A room to the right was labeled: DISPENSARY. To my left a door was open on a small office. An orderly in a stiff white jacket rose from behind a desk and motioned me down a long cross corridor to where a doorway showed golden against the dimmer hall.

"Your friends are in there, waiting for the captain. He'll come as soon as he's free."

"Will you tell him it's urgent, please?" Major Drew sent me.

Haunted Eyes

HE HURRIED away and I tipped down the endless polished corridor, listening to my footsteps echo and re-echo against the cold white walls and ceiling.

The surgeon's office was sparsely furnished with a bare desk; a bookcase full of heavy medical books; a few mahogany armchairs. Against that austere background nothing could have been more unseemly than our forgotten finery.

I looked at Elizabeth's white face above her pink armband; at Barney's great figure hunched over the desk, his hands twisting like a stricken jester, the pierced crimson heart on his back shocking reminder of Anne's down-falling form; and realized suddenly that I, too, was still in fancy dress.

Then I saw Annie, in decent black, a Queen Mary hat set rigidly level on her small head, twisting her handkerchief and staring from a corner—the spirit of tragedy brooding over a vanished feast.

Elizabeth stopped turning the leaves of a medical journal and glanced up with haunted eyes. Barney dropped his hands from a paper, white face against which his eyes were like the openings to gray, vacant corridors and rose, swaying a little.

"Has—has Adam found out anything?" he asked with desperate urgency.

I said, "I don't know," and avoided their eyes, which seemed to accuse me of withholding hope.

"He wants to see you—he's still at the Service Club."

I found a chair quickly and sat down because he was obviously holding himself up by a great effort.

"I'll go back—as soon as I've seen Doc," he said. "I've got things to do. There'll be no sleep for me," he added more strongly, "until we find—"

Elizabeth's eyes were fixed on the open doorway. I listened and heard them, too—the quick, quiet footsteps descending the stairs, traversing the long corridor.

Not over thirty now, in ten years time Captain Moore would be a little stooped, I thought irrelevantly as he stood in the doorway enveloped in the white surgical gown, his oversize head bent a little forward with the air of one peering over his glasses and listening for something only faintly audible. His mouth was controlled, his hands lean and sensitive—a surgeon's hands.

"You wanted me?" he asked of the room at large. Elizabeth had risen and taken a step forward. She seemed braced for a blow.

"We thought—it might not be too late," she said painfully. "Father would want nothing left undone."

In Barney's eyes there was a naked plea. So they were hoping—still.

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Monday: A mysterious note.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



COBBLER'S LAMP-- of the Middle Ages, DIFFUSED THE LIGHT OF A CANDLE BY 4 WATER-FILLED GLOBES...

THE FITZSIMMONS-MAHER FIGHT-- 1896, LASTED LESS THAN 2 MINUTES, YET A CIVIL WAR WAS NEARLY PRECIPITATED IN TRYING TO STOP IT... (U. S.-Mexico border)

FINLAND DOES NOT OWE THE UNITED STATES A WAR DEBT!

THE GARDEN OF WORMS! FLOWER WORMS OF THE ATLANTIC ACTUALLY BLOOM WITH WREATHS OF FEATHERED GILLS!

Garden of Worms
Along the shallow Atlantic waters from Cape Cod to New Jersey live the beautiful flower worms which, strange as it seems, are easily mistaken for plants instead of animals.

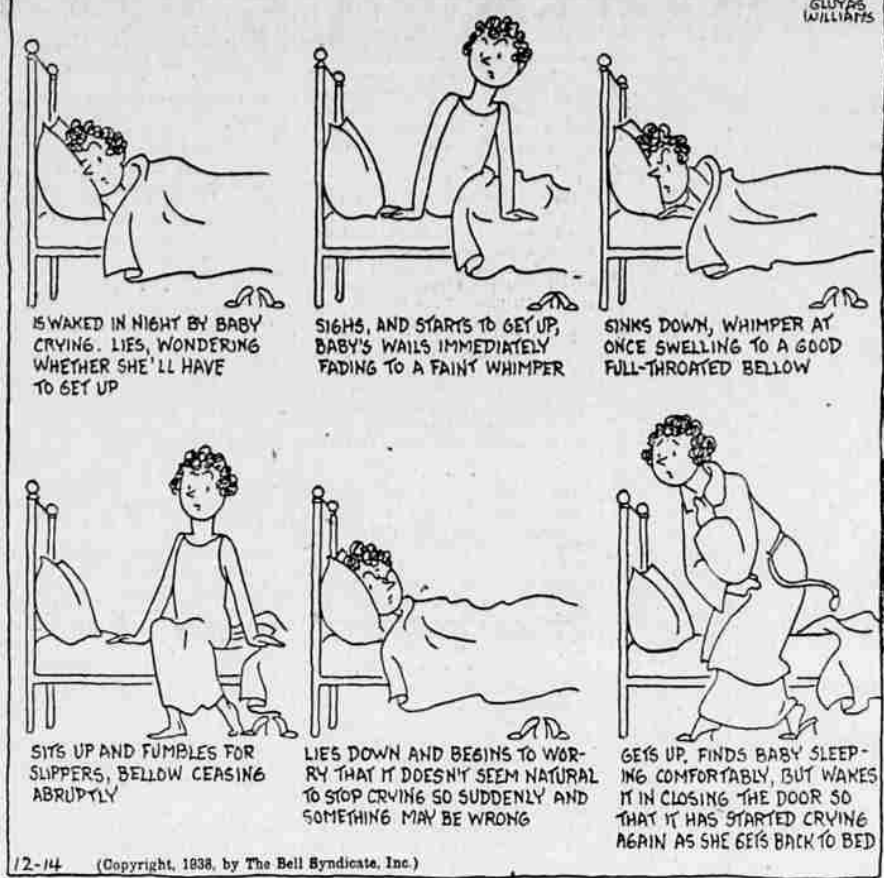
WILL DOUBLE CAPITAL EXPORT-IMPORT BANK
WASHINGTON, Dec. 15.—(AP)—Doubling of the lending power of the export-import bank, it was learned today, will be the first step in the Roosevelt administration's new program to expand trade between the United States and Latin America.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeets Figures It Out!
HOW DID THE DEADLY CARBON MONOXIDE GAS GET INTO THE CABIN OF THE AMPHIBIAN?
SKEETS, BETTY-LOU, JERRY AND HANK LOOK BLANKLY AT EACH OTHER AS THE PLANE RESTS PEACEFULLY ON THE CALM SEA.

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Gene Casey
CAN WE GET SOMETHING TO EAT, MR. CASEY? WE'LL PAY FOR IT—
NOPE!
FINE, BIG-HEARTED CHARACTER, EH?
LET'S BEAT IT—WE'LL TRY THE NEXT PLACE—
WHERE Y'GOIN' LADS?
TO SOMEPLACE WHERE WE CAN BUY A MEAL!

THE NEBBS—Funny Money?
STEVE IS PREPARING TO LEAVE AFTER AN EXCITING VISIT AT NORTHVILLE... BLIGHTED IN LOVE, NEARLY ROBBED OF HIS BLUE BIRD DIAMOND— THERE WASN'T A DULL MOMENT...
MR. POTTS, I WANT A DRAFT FOR \$5000— I DON'T WANT TO CARRY THIS CASH WITH ME.
YOU CARRIED IT HERE— SO CARRY IT BACK— I WOULDN'T BE BOTHERED HOUSING IT.

UP AND DOWN By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



IS WAKED IN NIGHT BY BABY CRYING. LIES, WONDERING WHETHER SHE'LL HAVE TO GET UP

SIGHS, AND STARTS TO GET UP, BABY'S WAILS IMMEDIATELY FADING TO A FAINT WHIMPER

SINKS DOWN, WHIMPER AT ONCE SWELLING TO A GOOD FULL-THROATED BELLOW

SITS UP AND FUMBLERS FOR SLIPPERS, BELLOW CEASING ABRUPTLY

LIES DOWN AND BEGINS TO WORRY THAT IT DOESN'T SEEM NATURAL TO STOP CRYING SO SUDDENLY AND SOMETHING MAY BE WRONG

GETS UP, FINDS BABY SLEEPING COMFORTABLY, BUT WAKES IT IN CLOSING THE DOOR SO THAT IT HAS STARTED CRYING AGAIN AS SHE GETS BACK TO BED

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S MATTER POT By C M PAYNE



WAA-H-H! I ONLY WENT OUT! THATS ALL I DID

THEN WHY DID SHE SPANK YOU?

BECAUSE IT WAS RAINING

AND IT WAS NOT MY FAULT IT WAS RAINING EITHER

MAW, I HAVE A REPORT THAT YOU TOOK MEASURES AGAINST THE OFFSPRING ON ACCOUNT OF THE INCREMENT WEATHER

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MRS. ROOSEVELT NOW IN INSURANCE FIRM

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15.—(AP)—Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt has become a member of the board of directors of the Boston Insurance firm of Roosevelt and Sargent.

DANES SUSPECT PLOT TO ABDUCT PREMIER

COPENHAGEN, Dec. 15.—(AP)—Police arrested and quickly released four Danish Nazis today after an intense but fruitless investigation of a suspected plot to kidnap Premier T. B. Stauning.

By SOL HESS