

THE ARMY POST MURDERS

By Virginia Hanson

The Characters

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

Yesterday: The strange girl is found stabbed. The murderer wore my mandarin coat.

Chapter 19

Lost And Found

"BUT who is she?" Barney demanded. "I strongly suspect that only one person knows the answer to that."

"Shaw burst out eagerly, 'And Mary and I were together in the lounge—don't you remember, Barney, you had just brought us coffee?'"

"I smiled a little. No need to pry for alibis from now on—they all had the general idea by now."

"Coffee," said Adam. "Kay, you need a cup—several cups. Here, take my flashlight and go down the other way, through the dressing room. Find Elizabeth and stay with her until I come. . . . And drink a cup for me."

To the left of the stage a short flight of steps led to an unobtrusive door opening on a narrow corridor. I followed it past the stage entrance, past two or three tiny dressing rooms, and arrived suddenly at the kitchen, a small, compact room dimly lighted by a pair of battered candles that had evidently seen service before.

The aroma of coffee, the yellow light, the general homely atmosphere, were comforting.

Elizabeth's concerned eyes viewed me from head to foot. She swept a stack of paper napkins from a high stool and established me on it. An instant later my teeth were chattering on the rim of a thick white china cup and the scalding, bitter fluid was shocking me back to some sort of control.

"Don't talk," she admonished me gently. "You're all right now. There's only Annie and me."

I saw her then—Annie in her decent black, the regal hat a fraction tilted, huddled in a corner beyond the gas range, her wizened, elfish face dismal and direful.

"When did you get here?" I asked.

"Just now," Elizabeth answered for her hurriedly. "She walked here from the Carew's quarters."

"Dismissed, I was," Annie croaked suddenly. "That whippersnapper of a medico comes in and sends me out—me the known Evie Carewe like a sister—me! I'll be speakin' to Mrs. Carewe alone, he says. So I needed here my girl will be glad to see me. So here I am. And she lapsed into dark brooding."

I set down the heavy cup and told her what had been happening upstairs.

I had even Annie's full attention. Horror, disbelief, then a kind of despair registered on Elizabeth's face. She made that futile gesture known as wringing one's hands.

"And Adam can do nothing?" "Maybe now—when the alibis are checked."

Such things can't be allowed to happen on Father's garrison," said Elizabeth. "Oh, if he were only here! They wouldn't dare!"

Suddenly the lights were on. We blinked at each other stupidly in the abrupt glare.

Elizabeth blew out the weak candle flame, and the acid smell of the scorching wicks momentarily filled the little room.

'An Inside Job'

"KAY— I turned. Adam was standing in the doorway. "Feeling better?" he asked cheerfully. "Care to help me a minute?"

I rose, thinking with shame in the bright, normal light of the panic that had gripped me only a few minutes before.

He was looking past me, his round, good-natured face oddly reassuring.

"You here, Annie? Good. Stay with Elizabeth—don't leave her for a minute. I'm depending on you."

I followed him into the narrow corridor. "Then I'll be waiting in the lounge—don't you forget that!"

He nodded. "Look, what did you do with that note—the typewritten note?"

I stared at him blankly. Did I imagine a trace of suspicion, of distrust in his candid eyes?

"But—but I don't know," I stammered, trying to remember and feeling guilty, because I knew that in his place I would be suspicious too. Still, I needn't have told him about the typewriter if

I had intended to destroy the note. But if I had regretted that confidence?

"I had it when I left her room," I said desperately. "At least I think so. Perhaps it's in the other room—the vacant room. I may have dropped it in the struggle."

"I looked there. It's not anywhere in sight. I hoped you might have hidden it—or still have it."

"I showed him my empty hands, the absence of pockets in my costume."

"Well, never mind. Only, do you remember the name of that sanitarium?"

I nodded, and he seemed relieved. "There were a handful of people in the lounge—Mrs. Orpington, Mrs. Flower, the Shaws, Barney. They watched us in ominous silence, I thought, as we crossed the dance floor. Adam paused for an instant."

"Shaw, go tell Elizabeth and Annie to join you—they're still in the kitchen. And please, don't anyone go wandering off alone. I'll be with you in a minute."

He waited for me to precede him into the reading room, then closed the door after us.

"Now—the name of the sanitarium," he said.

I told him, and he nodded. "I remember now."

I had noticed the telephone on a small table in the corner. He spoke briefly to the switchboard operator, replaced the instrument.

"I'm going to question them again," he said. "And after that—I don't know. This has got to be an inside job, I'm afraid. I mean, one of a small group. We've been all over those upstairs rooms. There's no one hiding there, and I'd take my oath there's been no one. There's dust half an inch thick over everything. I don't know whose job it is to look after the place—no one, I suspect, except the chaplain, and he's on a month's leave. The—Curtis girl had dusted her room with a towel. But nowhere else, except where you were tied up, were there any marks of disturbance. And the window screens are all latched on the inside. . . ."

"Thwarted Curiosity" THE telephone pealed.

"Hello—hello! Superintendent of Hillside Sanitarium? Doctor Moore calling. A former patient of yours, a Miss Ethel Curtis, has met with an accident. . . . Yes, fatal. We'd like to notify the relatives. . . ."

He listened, said, "I see," several times. Finally, "No, nothing at present. I'll communicate with you later. . . . Thank you, Doctor."

He replaced the instrument and turned back to me. His eyes were burning with excitement, with thwarted curiosity.

"Miss Ethel Curtis has been a patient here for three years. During that time she has had no visitors, and very few letters. Her bills have been paid regularly by a firm of Chicago lawyers—Hunt, Hope and Polk. Sounds incredible, I know, but that's what he said. She was a model patient, quiet and retiring, never mentioned any living relatives. Had improved in health during her residence there, was in no sense confined. Yesterday, that is Thursday, she simply walked out. She had received a letter, presumably there was money in it. One of the nurses saw the envelope. No return address. Postmark—Chicago. And named the town five miles from the post."

He turned back to the telephone. "I want a firm of lawyers in Chicago—Hunt, Hope and Polk. Yes, that's what I said. Yes, of course they're closed. Find out where they live, get any one of them on the phone. . . . Of course it will take time, so step on it."

He stood, passed a hand across his eyes. "I'm neglecting something—one of these things I ought to remember and can't well, maybe it will come back."

"The gun?" I asked.

"He looked at me oddly for a moment. 'I've found it,' he said impassively."

He went toward the door. I was suddenly horribly afraid. Not Charlie's gun? But how could he? He hadn't been to Elizabeth's—and the suitcase was locked."

It was then that I missed my evening bag. I remembered, in a sudden, illuminating flash, that I had left it lying on the chest of drawers in that room where the murdered girl lay. Had Adam found it—or the murderer?

Suddenly I had to know. "You're—you're sure it was the gun? Where was it?"

His hand was on the doorknob. He turned and looked at me with no expression whatever on his face.

"There had been two shots fired. And it was where I expected to find it—in Elizabeth's car. It was her gun, you see."

And he was gone before I could find my voice.

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Tomorrow: Checking the alibis.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



Bludgeon Boxer Commonly called the "manly art of self-defense," modern scientific boxing, strange as it seems, had its first world champion a man who chose to subdue his opponent with a club. James Figg is called the "Father of Modern Boxing" and in 1727 he fought and defeated Ned Sutton for the championship of England--of the whole world for that matter. The fight is said to have lasted an hour, which proves that there must have been a little science or skill used by the two men in ducking crushing blows from each other's cudgels. Figg was the first man on record to engage professionally in bare knuckle fighting, according to most sport historians. In 1716 he issued a card, engraved by the great artist, William Hogarth, announcing that he "taught fencing, singlestick and boxing." Figg proclaimed himself champion, and in many booth-fights at country fairs remained undefeated. He fought and defeated Sutton three times. Figg died in 1784 of pneumonia.

Horse Ambulances Strange as it seems, New York City boasts 10,000 horses within its city limits, because it is found that the animals are more economical for short freight hauls than are trucks. To care for these animals, often prostrated by summer heat and injured in winter by slipping on frozen streets, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals maintains horse ambulances which stand ready for action day or night. The society also maintains 48 permanent granite drinking fountains throughout the city, for horses only. Tomorrow: The mountain that wouldn't be climbed.

VETERAN OFFERS EYE TO BUY FAMILY HOME VANCOUVER, Dec. 21--(CP)—A great war veteran of Lynden, Wash., in a letter to a Vancouver newspaper today offered to give one of his 'good blue eyes' to some blind person for enough money to buy a home for his family of seven. The man, whose name the paper withheld added that he could not work. "All I ask is enough money to buy, or build a home for my family of seven." Herman Aebi, of Vancouver, made a similar offer last week but so far there have been no bidders.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Tommy Plays Safe!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—On the Rampage?



THE NEBBS—Meet the Wife



SUBURBAN HEIGHTS By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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By SOL HESS



MISSISSIPPI WOMAN ON SOCIAL SECURITY BOARD

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21--(AP)—President Roosevelt announced today the appointment of Mrs. Eileen Woodward of Mississippi to the Social Security board. Mrs. Woodward, who is an assistant administrator of WPA, will succeed Miss Mary Dewson on the Social Security board. The president said he believed Mrs. Woodward would serve for five years—the balance of Mrs. Dewson's term. Asked why the latter had resigned, Mr. Roosevelt remarked she couldn't stand it and then added hurriedly amid laughter he meant she could not stand the pace. There was no question of disagreement involved, the president said. WINDOW GLASS—We sell window glass and will replace your broken windows reasonably. Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

CHAPLIN WILL START FIRST TALKIE SOON

HOLLYWOOD, Calif., Dec. 21--(AP)—Charles Chaplin will start shooting his first talking picture in two weeks, his studio manager, Albert Reeves, announced today. Chaplin has tentatively selected "The Dictator" as his title. To accommodate the crowd scenes a lease is being taken on acreage in the San Fernando valley, nearby. Chaplin's new picture is based on a self-conceived idea and he also wrote the script. SOCIAL SECURITY GRANT ANNOUNCED FOR OREGON WASHINGTON, Dec. 21--(AP)—The Social Security board announced today grants totaling \$22,274,792 to 24 states for public assistance from January 1 to March 31, 1939. The allocations included: Oregon, aged, \$620,884; blind, \$15,160; children, \$88,973.