

# Casual Slaughters

By VIRGINIA HANSON

**YESTERDAY:** To Kay's dismay, Adam acts queerly after kissing her. Then Julia and Kay catch Sandra and Ivan in an embrace but prevent Jeff from seeing. The party has soured for all of them.

## Chapter 16 Death Warrant

WE DROVE to the club. Jeff came in very soon with an air of being quite alone, but with the chaplain at his heels, curly refused an invitation to join us and went upstairs. Chaplain Henry lingered, softening his own refusal, making manful attempts to prove himself a good fellow in spite of his cloth, and finally taking his departure with ill-concealed relief.

I think it was Gerald who suggested another swim. The lake breeze had died and the night turned sultry. Julia greeted the idea with enthusiasm but turned thumbs down on the officers' beach.

"The barge or else," she said darkly. "The barge it is," agreed Gerald. Adam stood in the lounge looking detached, aloof, and said that he believed he would turn in.

"Keys are in the car," he said. "You might put it in the garage when you get back." In vain Julia protested that she needed him for respectability, for a chaperon. Father was tired of tending the children and was not backward about showing it.

A compromise was finally reached by which I was to act as chaperon, and the three of us set off once more in Adam's car, with Gerald driving.

"Should we stop by your house for Sandra and Ivan?" he asked innocently. "In a pig's eye," said Julia elegantly. "That dizzy pair!" She fell silent, evidently brooding.

The moon was low behind a bank of clouds that promised rain before morning. "Drive up the beach a way," Julia suggested. "I don't like that barge in the dark. It's—sort of ghostly."

Gerald agreeably parked a hundred yards up the road from the barge, but we could still see it, a dark bulk against the sand, secret and forbidding. I waited until they were in the water, before swimming out to them. The beach, as far as I could see in either direction, was completely deserted.

It was fun, Julia and Gerald played like seals, diving, rising, slipping the water with hands like flipper.

We were resting on the sand, veiled by the half-darkness, when we heard a car and saw lights approaching from the direction of the post. It stopped on the far side of the barge and a car door slammed.

"Into the water," said Julia, "until we see who it is!" It was poor advice, but we followed it. We kept close together in the water, watching for an approaching shape along the sand, but there was none.

"Someone on the barge," Julia said presently, and we all saw something move slowly against the gray sky. Whether man or woman, the silhouette was too vague to betray. Not that we thought of that then. I think we all believed it to be a man because of the loneliness, even the ghostliness of the scene. And afterward, when we had discussed it until we were no longer sure of anything, we realized that there might have been more than one person, though there had been only one car door slam and no sound of voices.

Whoever the person or persons, whatever the errand, it was soon done. Perhaps ten minutes after the arrival of the car, we heard the door slammed shut and the prolonged, patient wifeline of the starter.

"Where's Ivan?" I THINK we were all afraid that whoever it was would not get away, when finally the motor coughed, started and turned, laboring in the sand.

"Forgot to turn on his ignition," guessed Gerald, but later Julia confided to me that it was Mimi's car. "It's hard to start—you always have to choke it."

"But what in the world would she be doing out here?" I asked. "Where does she go on these long evening drives of hers?" Julia countered.

Although she was to deny it, that conversation took place. It was not the sort of thing I would be likely to imagine.

On the way back in the car she announced, rather plaintively, that she had vacated her room for Ivan, and would have to bunk with Sandra.

"There are only four bedrooms in that big house, and Mimi and Dan each have one. Dan snores, or something." I asked her to stay with me, of course, and she accepted with alacrity.

"Do you want to stop and get anything?" Gerald asked, slowing the car as we neared their quarters. "I have an extra tooth-brush."

"And I'll lend you a nightie." "Swell. I'm not stop, then. I'll call up from the club." Adam was pacing the lighted club veranda. He saw us and hurried down the walk before Gerald could put the car away.

"Where's Ivan?" he asked, peering into the car as if he expected to find him there. "At home in bed, I trust," Julia told him. "Why this sudden desire for his company?"

"He's not at home. Sandra called up about ten minutes ago—she thought he was over here." "Kay, it must be over—I'm sure I'm not feminine enough to make him run out on Sandra. How did he get away from her? Climb out a window?"

"He didn't get away from her. He didn't come home with her. It seems to be one of those fool misunderstandings. We thought he was with them, they thought he was with us."

"Oh, goody!" said Julia. "He got left!" "Then where is he?" demanded Gerald practically. "He wasn't on the beach just now or he would have seen our car lights and joined us."

"That was a break," commented Julia. "He must have tried to walk home." Adam sounded worried. "I suppose he's lost out there somewhere."

Julia burst into song. "Through the dark of night I got to go where you are; If it's wrong or right, I got to go where you are. Ain't no chains can bind you, if you live I'll find you . . ."

"Shut up," said Gerald kindly, "and climb in the rumble seat. What you need is a little ride in the night air to cool your beautiful head."

Adam said, "The girls better go in and go to bed. This may take some time. Probably, have to turn out a detail of men."

"Bed?" asked Julia indignantly. "With the night but a pup? Don't be an old granny."

**Supine Form** I WAS getting to know every rut in that road. We did not stop at the barge this time, but drove on for a mile or two through territory I had never explored, stopping from time to time to honk the horn and listen for an answering call.

"In case he got turned around and started walking the wrong way," Adam remarked. But except for the purring of the motor and the chirring of cicadas in the thick undergrowth beside the road, there was no sound.

"Perhaps we'd better go back to the barge," Gerald suggested. "Maybe he had a date there." I said, fired with the idea. "That would explain why he kept quiet and stayed away from us. And then I remembered about Mimi's car and could have bitten my tongue out."

"By Jove—the person who came to the barge!" agreed Gerald enthusiastically, and told Adam about it.

"But whoever it was, he didn't stay long," I added, stressing the pronoun. Julia was not saying anything.

"Maybe they went away together," Adam suggested. "I don't think so," said Gerald. "Neither did I, but we could give no reason except the obvious one that there were no voices."

And so we went back, after all to the barge, Adam lighting our way with his flashlight and, single file, climbed the crude ladder and walked the narrow deck. And in the black deep the light of the flashlight, not the mirrored moon, but the supine form of the one who had been Ivan, with a scum of black water across his face.

According to the fiction I read, the French have an infallible method of solving a crime. They follow the essential clue. It sounds very simple. The only part I can't understand is how they can distinguish, in the confusion of clues that attend murder, the essential from the nonessential. Once that important distinction is made, it seems to me that the puzzle is as good as solved.

For instance, it is easy to look back now and see that Sandra and Ivan between them practically signed his death warrant that night. But how could anyone not gifted with second sight have deduced that from the events which took place? Even Sandra, at that time, must have had no suspicion that she was playing with dynamite. It is less easy to see why she was not warned by Ivan's death. But there was her obsession and her essential stupidity.

Stupidity may be too strong a word. She was clever about getting what she wanted, about winning people. As she seemed to have won Colonel Pennant and Mimi; as she must have won Jeff's mother and father, Julia had told me with some bitterness, only a few days before, that Colonel Taek had made Sandra beneficiary of his ten-thousand-dollar life insurance policy.

"That's about all most army officers leave," she explained. "He owned besides a house in Memphis, he had a big farm, and the farm in the Ozarks. He left those to Jeff, who can't find anyone who wants to buy either one. And Sandra didn't need the money—she had ten thousand from her own father that she got control of when she was eighteen. Oh, I know she couldn't live in luxury on the income of ten thousand, but it would have kept her until she got a job or a husband."

"Good husbands come high," I told her. "Twenty gets you better than ten."

"I was sorry the instant I said it, but I need to have been, for she seemed a little comforted." "I'd rather think he's marrying her for her money," she confessed. "I mean because he's in love with her. Only I know it isn't the money. Jeff isn't that sort."

I remembered that conversation later, when the question of inheritance assumed grave importance.

To be continued

## Argentina Moves To Keep Jews Out

Buenos Aires, July 12.—(AP)—The government ordered 100 members of the Argentine national gendarmerie to the Bolivian border today to bar illegal entry of German Jewish refugees who found a haven in Bolivia when they were barred from other South American countries. The order followed receipt of information from the governor of Salta province that a large number of Jews, many of whom were placed in farm colonies by the Bolivian government, were preparing to "infiltrate" into Argentina.

## Robert Service Reaches London

London, July 12.—(AP)—Robert W. Service, Canadian poet famed for his narrations on life in the Yukon, fleeing for the second time from German invaders, has arrived in London with his wife and daughter. Service, who fled from Poland last fall, caught a boat at St. Malo shortly before German bombs demolished most French channel ports.

## Vega Gets Large Plane Contract

Burbank, Cal., July 12.—(AP)—The Vega Airplane company today announced it had been given a \$30,000,000 contract to build a quantity of new type twin-engine bombing planes for the British government.

## STRANGE AS IT SEEMS

by JOHN HIX



**ANT--** in Japanese, is written by COMBINING SYMBOLS FOR INSECT, LINGERS, JUSTICE AND COURTESY!

**ATOMIC POWER!**  
AN ATOM OF U-235, RARE FORM OF URANIUM, EXPLODES WITH A LIBERATION OF 200,000,000 ELECTRON VOLTS WHEN BOMBARDED WITH A SINGLE "SLOW" NEUTRON!  
IT'S ENERGY EQUIVALENT IS 5,000,000 TIMES THAT OF COAL!

TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBERS IN SAO PAULO, Brazil, ARE LISTED IN THE RED BOOK UNDER 4 CLASSIFICATIONS--  
NAME  
STREET ADDRESS  
BUSINESS  
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CLINTON AND MARION ARE TOWN NAMES IN 28 DIFFERENT STATES OF THE U.S.

## TRAIN WINDOW

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



(Released by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

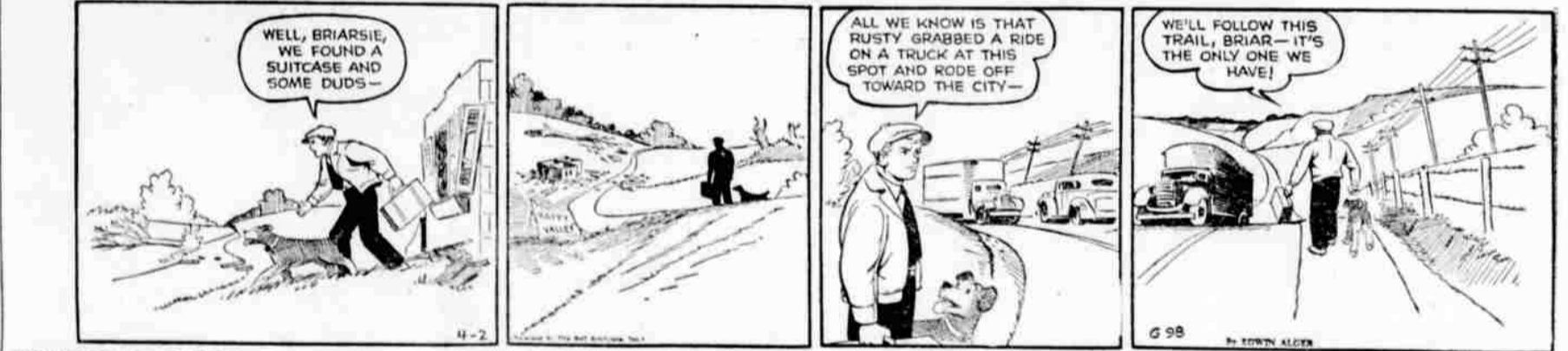
## TAILSPIN TOMMY

More Danger Threatens!



## BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Long, Long Trail!

By EDWIN ALGER



## THE NEBBS—The Go-Between

By SOL HESS



## Britain Postpones Removing Children

London, July 12.—(AP)—The British government was reported tonight to have postponed its scheme for moving British children to the dominions.

Closing time for 100 Late to Classified Ads is 1:30 p. m.

## Defense Lacking

Washington, July 11.—(AP)—Three members of the house military committee, after surveying northeast coast defenses, recommended today that the United States acquire and fortify fleet and air bases in Nova Scotia and Bermuda.

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