

● SERIAL STORY

MURDER IN PARADISE

BY MARGUERITE GAHAGAN

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CHAPTER I

FEELING the frosty glass under my hands and the luxury of those elegant chairs into which one can sink low and still look graceful, I was all prepared for a chatty half hour with the girls, catching up on the gossip and news now that I was no longer a school teacher at the end of a hard week tussling with high school sophomores who don't care if Shakespeare wrote plays or carried a football.

But I never did drink that tall, cold concoction with all the pleasure I anticipated.

I suppose memories of Paradise Lake and fresh mint will always affect me that way. And the sound of Finn McCool, Maudie's black, button-eyed Scottie, thumping the floor will always cause the hair to stand up on the back of my neck.

Paradise Lake was supposed to be quiet. We had the assurance of dozens of friends who had gone there during the past 20 years and who took pride in the fact that dance halls, hot dog stands, and juke boxes had no place there.

Maudie is our mother and we three are her children. At least she still calls us children, although looking at that touch of gray over my left ear, I can't rightly say that any one of us is in the adolescent stage. The boys—Thomas and William—started out as newspapermen, following in the steps of our late father, James O'Connor. But then William went into advertising and Thomas into promotion. And I, Mary, was nothing more interesting than a teacher who, when vacation finally arrived, felt the need of a rest.

Maudie probably would have preferred a livelier place than Paradise Lake because Maudie, while she can look like a Park Avenue dowager when her white hair is curled and she's sporting one of those exclusive little numbers that manage to give lines to an 180-pound chassis, is really the problem child of the family. Maudie likes people—any kind of people, and excitement in big swallows.

I taught Lit. I in school and my knowledge of nature was out of Shelley and Wordsworth and not from experience, so that the first week of going back to the soil was enough to keep me occupied.

WHEN I finally emerged from my seven-day coma, I looked around to see how Maudie was standing the quiet. She had been very firm on our arrival as to her intention to reduce.

"Salads, liquids, and rowing will do it," she said. "And for you I'll fix another menu with Jersey milk, and home-made bread and pies and cakes, and real country butter."

"You've been getting around," she said. "Well, everyone gets acquainted quickly at a place like this. I went to the inn for the mail and we chatted a bit. His name's Chris Gordon and he's been here for years. A native I guess you'd call him. But not a farmer, definitely. And then Miss Morris told me about the bread woman, too."

"Oh, you've met her?"

"Yes, and so should you. She'd be a lesson in what not to become. She's a spinster."

I let that left-handed compliment go by. "I bet that pretty niece of hers doesn't have much fun stuck up here with her all summer," she added. "Her name's Jeanie, like Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair, and her hair's light brown, too, and her eyes are blue. She's young—about 20—and if she doesn't kick over the traces pretty soon Miss Millie will turn her into a tight-lipped old maid."

"It's none of your business and don't go trying to educate the child," I said firmly. Maudie's flair for taking people in hand and for introducing the romantic no is well known to all of us.

"I've no intention of butting in," she said with great dignity, and marched to the kitchen to eat the piece of chocolate cake I had passed by at lunch.

"IT'S a disgrace," she said that evening after bringing me the papers from the inn. "It's a disgrace the way that man acts. Bringing his fiancée right here under Jeanie Morris' nose."

"All right," I said, "let's have it." Once I'd thought I was in love, and so by the time she had told me the story I was feeling as Maudie felt. Jeanie Morris lived with her aunt, Miss Millie, about a quarter of a mile from us down the lake. Miss Millie had raised Jeanie, and summers were always spent in the big white house off by itself. Probably Miss Millie never intended Jeanie to get too intimate with the summer crowd, but summer folks have a way of nosing in where they're often not welcome, and that was what Herbert Cord did.

It was three years ago that he had first met Jeanie and what the cottagers thought was just a summer romance began to look like the real thing. Herbert Cord was about 30, big, blond, hale and hearty. He had some kind of business in the city and he radiated sophistication when he came to the inn for week-ends.

BY the second summer everyone took it for granted that they were engaged, although old Miss Morris refused to acknowledge that her niece or Cord even knew one another. No one knew just what clashes there must have been between Jeanie and her aunt, but Jeanie continued to swim with Herbert Cord, and dance with him at the hall when name-bands

played at Round Lake a few miles away, and stop in for a sandwich at the inn evenings.

"But this summer," Maudie continued, her voice growing more agitated as she unfolded the story, "this summer Cord arrived with a girl—a Margie Dixon, and introduced her to everyone as his fiancée. Of course since no engagement was announced between the man and Jeanie I suppose he had a right to change his mind. But to bring her here—the other girl, I mean—and flaunt her right under Jeanie's nose. It's cruel. And it's hurting the child."

"You can see it in her eyes," Maudie said with tears in her own. "I saw her look at him last night. They were in the inn when I was there, and I guess the girls had met before because Jeanie seemed to know this Margie. Oh, everything was fine. But you can imagine how Jeanie must feel with that girl—and I must say she is good-looking in a dark-haired, green-eyed sort of way—hanging on Herbert Cord's arm, and acting in that possessive style."

"He's a fool," I said. "And he's playing with dynamite, too. You'd think he would know enough about women not to deliberately set such a stage. He'll probably get his ears pinned back before his triumphant visit's over."

I could hear my own voice saying those words when I stood beside Maudie late that night on the path through the little woods near the cottage, and looked down at the body of Herbert Cord. My hand shook so that the flashlight wavered in circles.

"He got more than his ears pinned back," I whispered. His head was turned so that one ear was doubled over, but more important than that was the fact that he was dead and that his body crushed the bed of mint under it and made the night heavy with the tangy odor.

(To Be Continued)

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William
Ferguson



NEXT: A law that governs moons.

FAMOUS RACE HORSE

HORIZONTAL

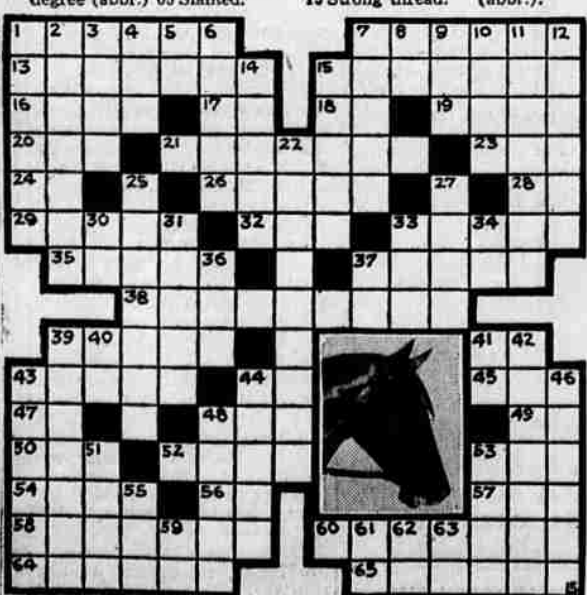
- Water strider.
- Clumsy.
- Covered a wall.
- Three-pronged scepter.
- Flower.
- Symbol for tantalum.
- Pronoun.
- Bristle.
- Beverage.
- Sport with swords.
- Run.
- Musical note.
- Eyes closely.
- One hundred and one.
- Trap.
- Night before.
- Gloss.
- South American quadruped.
- Reaches across.
- Pictured Kentucky Derby winner.
- Fades.
- Elaborate.
- Furnish food.
- College-born residents degree (abbr.).
- Slanted.

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

DUKE OF KENT
IL EN IRE OE SA
ANI ESTATES PER
LACER ESS TRADE
OR E AL
CAN COE
AT CAME
BETON L
ORAL
RATED P
ALA AVE EDD ROE
GALE IE NE MERE
ERST ANODE ODIN

VERTICAL

- Small fish (pl.).
- Porcelain clay (pl.).
- Church part.
- Golf mound.
- Sumix.
- Networks.
- Small birds.
- Sloth.
- European fish.
- Change direction.
- Lures.
- Box of Russia.
- Trip rhythmically.
- Strong thread.
- Horseback procession.
- One who wanders stealthily.
- Type of wagon.
- Morindin dye.
- Anesthetic.
- Watering place.
- Print measure.
- Belonging to him.
- Compass point (abbr.).
- Sunshade.
- Near.
- Bone.
- Drive back.
- Photographic instrument.
- Beclout.
- Muddled.
- Announcement of intended marriage.
- Small case.
- Earth.
- Compass point (abbr.).
- Sunshade.
- Near.
- Bone.
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OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams



RED RYDER



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



WASH TUBBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



ALLEY OOP



OUR BOARDING HOUSE, with Major Hoople



By Fred Harman



By Harold Gray



By Martin



By Crane



By Blosser



By V. T. Hamlin

