

SERIAL STORY

I AM A MURDERER

BY MORRIS MARKEY

COPYRIGHT, 1942, NEA SERVICE, INC.

At some minutes past 8 o'clock (Daylight Saving Time) of a September evening in the year 1940, I stood in full view of perhaps 30 men and women, all of whom were acquainted with me, at least by sight, and shot two bullets into the heart of Col. Wesley Hope Merriwether. I then moved, with such swiftness as may be forgiven in the circumstances, away from the scene.

This could lead you to believe that I am a fugitive from justice. But that is hardly the case. I am not a fugitive—in the sense of the word as one in flight. I live in surroundings of the utmost charm and serenity, with no care at all upon my mind and certainly no fear, while police officers of a whole continent search among the byways of a hodge-podge society for some trace of me. Such a trace they can never, possibly, find.

My—well, I suppose we must call it a vendetta, though I despise the word—as has been accomplished. Perhaps, indeed, the whole purpose of my existence has met, and passed, its climax. At any rate, that is the best explanation I can provide for my present compulsion to set down these facts upon paper.

It is no doubt odd, at the age of 34, to be a man who has completed his work upon this earth, to be sitting beneath the awning which covers the afterdeck of his yacht, glancing out over the blue waters of the timeless sea, and dwelling upon memories after the fashion of an ancient veteran of long-forgotten wars. But such, alas, is the truth of it.

Really? Well, perhaps within a certain while I shall hitch my wagon to another star. Though no star in all the heavens could be so glitteringly compelling as the last one. The pursuit of no dream so fascinating, so magnificently satisfying, as that which left Merriwether dead, and finished, and even a trifle pitiable because even in the extremity he did not lose his elegance.

Be that as it may. Would you care for the story? CHAPTER I THE station wagon rolled along the level paved road, past the elms and the broad lawns of the manor houses. Cynthia Merriwether was driving, and it was an astonishing thing that she could invest even so commonplace an occupation with a spirit of zest and gaiety. She was a lovely creature, with golden red hair and bright blue eyes, and laughter that trailed through the open windows of the wagon to hang in the soft air.

It was in the nature of things that she should have not one companion, but three, and all of these three men. Henry Prentiss was beside her on the front seat, amiably assuring her that within the next two hours she would be bankrupt.

"You haven't a chance in the world, Miss Pretty," he said. "Even if your precious Whirlwind had Tommy Hitchcock playing number three, they couldn't beat my crowd today. We're hot, I tell you."

"But remember," she said, "you're out of it. How can Clover get anywhere at all without the magnificent Prentiss—wonder of the west, southpaw marvel of the times?"

Prentiss laughed. "Clover goes up three goals, Pretty, when Prentiss takes to the sidelines. I'd rather have Mike in there any day, if Mike is mounted right. He will be today."

He was an easy sort of man. His blond hair was burnt with the sun and wind. His very blue eyes rarely lost their touch of laughter, of some profound and secret amusement that nudged his soul, day in, day out. He was strongly made, and his shoulders seemed, perhaps, a trifle broader than they really were beneath the exaggerated checks of his pale tweed jacket.

Toby Parker, leaning between them from the back seat, was tight and nervous. "How do you get rated, anyway, Hank?" he asked. "I thought they ruled out left-handers three or four years ago."

Fred West, who sat beside him, was in quick agreement. "It's dangerous stuff, you know, Hank. To tell the truth, I always go haywire when I see you coming down on the ball. Haven't the faintest idea which side you're going to play. Horror of smashing into you head on."

BOTH of the younger men were in boots and white breeches and the absurd gray-and-green checked shirts of the Whirlwind side. Behind them, on the floor of the wagon, were sticks and helmets, spurs and whips and spare tack and camel's hair coats and gaudily striped towels.

Prentiss grinned at them. "Well, it's a little like the time they ruled out spitball pitchers in

baseball. All spitballers in good standing could keep on throwing in their rather unsanitary way until they wore out, but no new ones were allowed. Same as me in this game. The left-handers with a rating could go on playing, at least until the game by betting too much money on it. "Careful, Mr. Puritan," she said, "or you'll get no bid to the champagne party I'm throwing on my winnings."

"Objections withdrawn!" he shouted, and the grooms considered this a monstrously amusing remark. (To Be Continued)

Cynthia turned her head about to regard the younger men. The station wagon, by some special miracle, continued true upon its course. "You hearties are beginning to sound a little jittery," she observed. "Get your minds off the game. Think about Ginger Rogers or Fred Allen. Because you've got to win, you know. I've got millions riding on you. But millions!"

"I'd feel a lot easier," Toby Parker said, "if you hadn't put all that jack on us. Even if it is only thousands instead of your crazy exaggeration, I don't like to play for anybody's chips but mine. And if it doesn't annoy you too much, Cynthia, there's a Mack truck coming out of Miller's drive."

She laughed and turned her eyes to the road. They slipped around the truck, and Cynthia exchanged a quick, amused glance with Henry Prentiss.

"You know," she said, "I don't really mind if they're a little ner-vi-ous." Cynthia Merriwether looted the station wagon down head-on; collision removed them from the lists. I even think about its possibilities myself, sometimes."

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



MONTEREY WAS THE CAPITAL OF CALIFORNIA UNDER THREE DIFFERENT FLAGS... SPANISH, MEXICAN AND AMERICAN!

LATE STATESMAN

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and answers. Includes a small portrait of a man.

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and answers.

the nose. Everybody grinned at her, and Captain Pugh, the umpire, got down from his tall chestnut to take both of her hands, and return her smile, and boom that she was ruining the game by betting too much money on it. "Careful, Mr. Puritan," she said, "or you'll get no bid to the champagne party I'm throwing on my winnings."



AT SEARS... IT'S NOT THE IDLE RICH WHO CLIP THE COUPONS

No indeed! It's the regular folks who sometimes run short of money and like the convenience of Purchase Coupons in their purses. Get a bookful today and spend them like cash when you need them. Small down payment, usual carrying charge. GET YOURS TODAY AT Your SEARS CREDIT Office

