

• SERIAL STORY

'I AM A MURDERER'

BY MORRIS MARKEY

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THE STORY: This is the story of the "perfect crime" - the murder of Col. Wesley Hope Merriwether in the library of his Long Island estate...

REVERIES AND POLO

CHAPTER III

THE only report that came to Mrs. Porter West of her son's proposal to Cynthia Merriwether was in a chance remark that Fred delivered as he drank coffee with her after dinner one night.

"By the way," he said, "Cynthia told me to go clear. They but, and she said a little wryly, 'she said it could be a tree in her own back yard.'"

On the whole, this was not too disturbing to Mrs. Porter West. She had learned, with men and with horses, the inestimable art of patience - and persistence she did not have to learn because it was born with her.

"Keep your head," she replied quietly, "and don't do anything young or foolish."

Which seemed fertile advice except for one element which grew steadily into the situation. That element was Henry Prentiss.

Now it should be said at once that Col. Wesley Hope Merriwether and his daughter Cynthia were not old school. They but, not every in the strict sense, Long Island. Six or seven years ago they had appeared at Gull Point, and the colonel had bought, for certain holy quantities of cash money, the old and altogether magnificent Stone estate.

And horses once more had filled the barns. And a preternaturally shy Cynthia had taken confidence unto herself and had grown slowly beautiful.

When had they come? Well, no advice was offered from Stone House, and the times had changed to affect, permanently no doubt, the asking of direct questions upon such a matter.

Did the beagling crowd look about a little wistfully for somebody to serve breakfast after the Sunday morning courting? Stone House was gracious in its hospitality, simple with its food, and positively distinguished with its Fish House punch, within whose aromatic bowls the bouquet of Cliequot '29 was never missing.

He would hear the secretary of the Hunt and the master of fox hounds explain the situation - listening most gravely - and then, after some moments of consideration and in the quietest of tones, he would say, "I think it would be a pleasure, gentlemen. I am always glad to be of such assistance as I may manage."

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When Cynthia grew of an age to undertake the duties of hostess (no Mrs. Merriwether had ever been seen or even mentioned) the entertainments within those broad and enviable rooms, upon the terrace, at the pool and the tennis courts, became more lavishly every body who was anybody felt at home there, despite the magnificence, and in a confused and troubled world Stone House was a haven of quiet merriment and all of its atmosphere was of ineffable security.

There was only one curious note. The guests at Stone House were, without exception, the people of Gull Point (and their own week-end or summer guests). Nobody ever appeared from the outside world, nobody from that existence which the Merriwethers must, perforce, have lived before their arrival in the community.

It would not be a precise statement to say that Mrs. Porter West enjoyed her hospitality of Stone House. Naturally she was an eye-guest list prepared and kept carefully to date by Mitchell Grace, the Colonel's secretary. She even forewent her native antipathy to invitations-by-telephone, and invariably accepted them. But the verb "to enjoy" has connotations peculiar to itself. Mrs. Porter West was too shrewd a woman to spend her opportunities in the vain pleasures of the fleeting hour.

And she found out, early indeed, enough to convince her that here, despite certain unsatisfactory details, was the Main Chance - for her Frederick, and not incidentally by any means, for herself.

Then the insufferable Henry Prentiss appeared. Four years ago, wasn't it? Yes, about four years. He, too, seemed to come out of nowhere. Oh, one or two of the boys remembered playing polo with him on the coast, at Midwick and the Uplifters. But what was that? Hollywood? And before Hollywood? Who could know? Probably born in Flatbush!

She had addressed her son upon the subject within a month of Henry Prentiss' arrival. "By the way, Frederick" (uttering of the newspaper and sudden interest in some obscure item).

"You were saying something." "Dear me - what could it have been - Oh! I was just wondering, who is your friend Henry Prentiss? Seems a rough and tumble sort of chap."

"Hank?" Fred laughed. "Salt of the earth, Mother. Don't bother. Hell not contaminate your precious Gull Point. The man's positively morse." By Joe, Mother, the most morse citizen I ever knew!"

"I don't care for your language. I asked you a simple question. Very simple."

"To wit: Who is my friend Henry Prentiss? Let us reply, then. He is a guy from California who had a six-goal rating there, good for a three-goal rating in our own high-class backyard. He plays a nice game and he's got top ponies to do it with. He lives in the Brewer cottage, which he rented, and as far as I know he pays his rent - along with his other bills."

"I never saw him fumble the check at 21 or the Stork Club or the St. Regis. He doesn't gossip and never boasts. He's good company, and personally I like him. But, wait a minute! His necktie! I knew something was wrong with the guy. He wears lousy, noisy, viciously expensive neckties. Guess I'll have to drop him after all."

CYNTHIA gave a shrill cry, jumping to her feet and clapping her hands. And Mrs. Porter West swam out of her bitter reveries and lifted her eyes to the soothing green carpet of the playing field - to the little clump of horsemen pulling up their mounts at the mouth of the north goal.

Her son had just scored beautifully from a wide angle, and the scoreboard told that his Whirlwinds were leading the Clovers, 5 to 3. Henry Prentiss was enjoying Cynthia's excitement to the utmost. He looked with delight at her pink cheeks, her eyes glowing with all of her grand vitality, her small fists beating against each other - and he laughed aloud, slapping his thigh.

Mrs. Porter West murmured to herself, "Gauche individual!" and kicked the bench in front of her with her elegant toe, in a manner of such vigor that it would cer-

tainly have been frowned upon by any stout-hearted member of the old school. (To Be Continued)

"RED CROSS"

COFFEYVILLE, Kas., (AP)—The private said he wanted to speak to Field Director Dwain Daughton. "Name, please?" asked the Red Cross secretary. "Red Cross." "Yes, it is—but I must have your name."

"Well, it's really James A. Cross, but back in Buffalo, the guys all call me Red."

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ANSWER: Webster's dictionary says either is correct, with long "A" preferred.

LATE ACTRESS

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and answers.



By Harold Gray



By Harold Gray



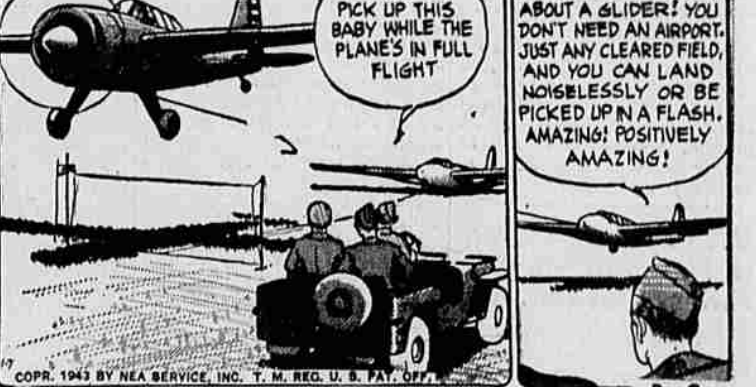
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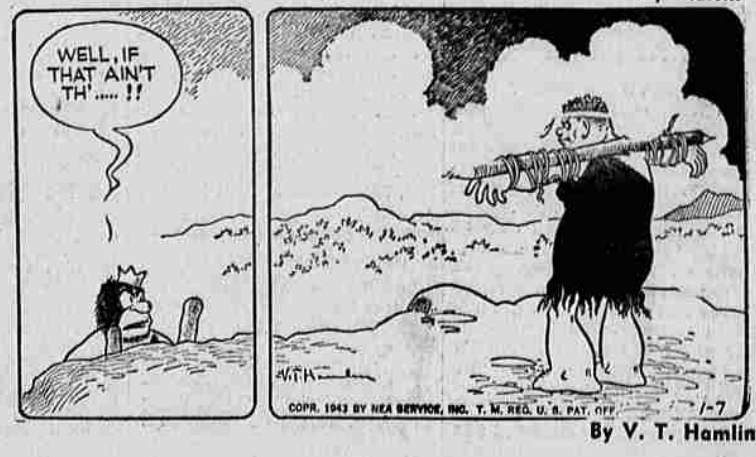
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By Martin



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