

● SERIAL STORY
'I AM A MURDERER'
BY MORRIS MARKEY

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CHAPTER XXIV
DURING these years I lived in Cleveland, O. The nature of my business affairs had taken me there, and I had settled into a small, obscure apartment. I lived in the utmost simplicity, and avoided friends. From time to time, I would change to another apartment, equally obscure—and at the same time I would change my name to a new one.

For, from the very outset, I knew that the clean execution of my aims must leave my own history, my own trail through life, a misty and confused one. The boy named Richard Fry was slowly erased from existence upon the earth. And in his place there emerged not a single, new individual, but a dozen wholly inconspicuous individuals.

It was this basic necessity, indeed, which laid the solid groundwork for the method which I was to employ in the final scene, although I did not realize it at the beginning.

I fell into the habit of playing roles: at first, from the simple need to allow John Hunter of No. 12 Cherry avenue to fade out of life in behalf of Charles McGraw of No. 67 Albemarle street. But every mortal soul, no matter what the steadiness and singularity of his purpose upon the earth, must needs find some amusement. And so I took to the amusement of creating brief characters when the mood came upon me.

One evening, I would be a debonaire blade in a Chicago cabaret—an immaculately turned out fellow of the world, easy to meet at the bar, a ready spender of money, requesting particular numbers from the orchestra and rewarding the players lavishly for playing them.

Again, I was a snarling dock-walker, or a cold and silent and dangerous figure in some lakefront dive. Once, I spent two days as a make-believe policeman—actually giving summonses to several unhappy violators of the parking and speeding regulations—without being questioned or suspected.

This succession of pretenses which were, I think, quite harmless in their effect upon other people, became in short my hobby. Until, at last, it dawned upon me that it was something more than a hobby—that it would perhaps play a critical part in my plan.

OF course, I had no real conception as to the manner in which the ultimate scene would be played out. I had wit enough to realize that the stage-management of that scene—in which my own complete safety would be of major importance—must depend exactly upon the setting and the circumstances in which I would at last find him.

I knew, with a complete certainty, that I would find him. It never occurred to me for a single instant that my search would fail, or that other, and higher, justices would take his retribution before I could take mine. For, you see, I had my own religion—and I had faith in it.

I was in Chicago, on an errand connected with my sporadic business affairs, when I did, at last, find him.

Which is not to say that I saw him, nor recognize at the moment that my quest was at an end. I had brought along with me a small accumulation of my trade journals. And in one of them, on a bitter morning when the wind from the lake fluttered the curtains even through the closed windows of my hotel room, I came upon an item:

Col. Wesley Hope Merriwether had announced his retirement from all active interest in his gold and silver enterprises, and resignation from the boards of Twin Valley Smelting Company, Spillway Development Corporation, and other companies with which he has been associated. He will retire to an estate which he has recently acquired at Gull Point, Long Island.

I telephoned to the editor of the journal.

"This is the Chicago Mirror," I said. "We noticed your item on Merriwether in the current issue, and we haven't got anything on him in the files. Can you tell us a little about him? Is he a Chicago man?"

There was a wait. "Hello. We haven't got much on him either. One of our boys picked up that bit of news, and we ran it. That's about all I know. He hasn't been in the news much, I guess. Maybe just some figure-head."

"Thank you." Telephone calls to the corporations listed produced a fact: All of them were singularly averse to talking about Wesley Hope Merriwether. "Colonel Merriwether has given instructions that he is to receive no publicity."

It was simply a matter of routine to complete my business affairs and take the train to New York.

GULL POINT was less than an hour from the city, and on my second day there I saw Col. Wesley Hope Merriwether, looking into his face as he was pointed out to me, passing in the street—and knowing that I looked into the face of Norman Tinker.

I felt no surge of elation. Such a moment had been ordained from

the start of time. I spent four days at Gull Point—as a salesman of drug sundries, this time, and living in a cheap room—meeting the small business people, and listening, and discovering the nature of this community called Gull Point. I learned that Colonel Merriwether had a daughter in his household, and I saw that daughter.

I saw also my mother in her hair and in the proud fine lift of her face. But, again, it must be confessed that my emotions were not profoundly stirred. These emotions had been burned brittle on a day long ago, in the far distant forest.

During the four days, I learned enough to enable me to go back to the life of Paul Gray, in Cleveland, and to sit down and think. That thinking occupied the better part of three weeks. From it there emerged the basic pattern of the plan. Not the details, of course. Those must wait upon events, upon the imperables of chance and of human caprice. But, in all of its essentials, the plan was formed.

It was a long-term plan, indeed. It contemplated serious use, upon the grand scale, of that playing-acting with which I had diverted myself in the past.

It required the creation of two characters, not one. For the preparation of them—or at least of the most important of them—I decided to go to California. The choice was obvious. Nobody knew me there, nowadays. And California, particularly the neighborhood of the moving picture studios, was the one conspicuous spot on earth where a stranger might appear

out of nowhere and "escape" even the most casual interest in his past.

I spent a year in the Hollywood country before I returned at last to Gull Point: returned now as a gay and careless fellow, friend to all the world. And on the day that I took the lease upon a small, carefully chosen cottage, I signed that lease with the name of my new self—Henry Prentiss. (To Be Continued)

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD By William Ferguson



A GROUNDHOG'S BODY TEMPERATURE DROPS TO ABOUT 37 DEGREES, OR JUST ABOVE FREEZING, AND HIS HEART BEAT SLOWS DOWN TO LESS THAN 10 BEATS PER MINUTE.



QUOTING ODDS EVEN DANDELIONS HELP WITH THE WAR! THEY FURNISH POLLEN FOR SPRING BEE BROODS... BEES MAKE HONEY, AND HONEY SAVES SUGAR.

FAMOUS TRAINER Answer to Previous Puzzle

WEST VIRGINIA	22 Boat paddle.
SERAI AVAILINIP	25 Gratuity.
TENDER GNETUMS	26 Commanded.
APEDIO SIAUSI	28 Bestow blessing.
SEB WEST	29 Separately.
PATRI VIRGINIA	30 He was also a well-known
ANRIN TRITRO	33 Play on words
SUCHIN TRITRO	35 Noise.
HE EATEN IN	37 Crowds together.
CHARLESTON ATOM	39 Hitter.
RAIDERS EELERS	41 Individual.
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	48 Yes (Sp.).
	49 Employer.
	50 Paid notice.
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	53 Influenza (colloq.).
	54 Bind.
	56 Knock.
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	59 Either (abbr.).
	59 Music note (abbr.).
	61 Steamship (abbr.).
	63 Negative.
	64 Symbol for stannum.

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Out Our Way By J. R. Williams



Red Ryder By Fred Harmon



Little Orphan Annie By Harold Gray



Freckles and His Friends By Blosser



Wash Tubbs By Crano



Boots and Her Buddies By Martin



Alley Oop By V. T. Hamlin



Our Boarding House With Major Hoople By V. T. Hamlin



Red Ryder By Fred Harmon



Little Orphan Annie By Harold Gray



Freckles and His Friends By Blosser



Wash Tubbs By Crano



Boots and Her Buddies By Martin



Alley Oop By V. T. Hamlin