

• SERIAL STORY

'I AM A MURDERER'

BY MORRIS MARKEY

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HOW IT WAS DONE

CHAPTER XXVII

THE preparations for Vaughan Dunbar's first appearance at Stone House were somewhat complex.

Henry Prentiss had to be injured, and for two reasons. First, I played, a people would have wanted to discuss the game with me at Cynthia's party, to chide me for missing a shot or congratulate me for making one. In such a case, several people at least would have had their attention drawn directly to the fact that I was not there. Not playing, if they missed me at all they would probably assume that I was off taking treatment from my doctor.

As it was, only Cynthia could be positive of my absence. And my excuse to her was deliberately an annoying one. She was fond of me. She would not be likely to point out to our friends that I was not there—that I had gone to keep a rendezvous with another woman.

The second reason? An aid to the disguise. Everybody knew that Henry Prentiss had an injured hand—and the bandages which covered that simulated hurt were put on as conspicuously as possible. The very absence of them in the person of Vaughan Dunbar, would add to the conviction of his character.

That first night, the grand entrance of Vaughan Dunbar upon the scene, was the real test, of course. But a failure at that time would not have been disastrous. If I had detected the slightest suspicion of my masquerade, the faintest glance of mistrust in any face, I would simply have dropped the disguise forthwith, and laughed merrily at the premature discovery of my practical joke.

The same escape from the situation was always available, of course—right down to the last, critical instant.

The minor mechanics of telephone calls, messages and the rest were simple enough to arrange.

I had three bad moments during the whole time of Vaughan Dunbar's existence. The first came on my second visit to Stone House—that time when I had to exert every morsel of my ingenuity to talk about Swedish mines. You will recall that Norman Tinker (or Colonel Merriweather, if you prefer) began the afternoon conversation with the remark that I reminded him of someone he had known, and asked me whether my kinfolk had ever visited California. Of course he was not remembering Henry Prentiss.

The second anxious moment came during the talk which Cynthia and I had beside the pool. To my immense astonishment, I saw that, driven by the vacancy and lack of meaning in her daily life, she was becoming much attracted to one whom she believed a serious man of the world. She was about to fall in love with a creature who did not even exist!

For a brief moment, I was tempted to abandon the whole plan, and to take Henry Prentiss and Vaughan Dunbar forthwith out of Cynthia's life. Then the memory of that day in the wilderness floated back to me, and flooded all my mind, and stilled my instant of weakness.

Again, I was distressed on the day of the climax itself. I felt it necessary to appear at Stone House at lunch time. Among other reasons, I wished to satisfy myself, one last time, that the identity of Vaughan Dunbar was fully accepted.

But, despite the care which I had used in forwarding the telegram to myself, so that I would be able to leave before the meal itself, it was not until I was actually in the library that I realized I had made a mistake. I had dared, for the first time, to appear as Vaughan Dunbar in full daylight. Certainly, that appearance was in the shadowed library, where my car stood, there was brilliant sunshine. Suddenly, after showing Cynthia and Mitchell Grace the telegram, I realized that they would follow me out to the car if I let them.

The risk was too great. So I simply burst from them without ceremony, and virtually ran to take myself away.

I MAY be forgiven, I believe, a certain measure of excitement on that day of days. And that excitement came very near to ruining the scheme entire. I had to play in the polo game, though certainly I did not want to. Merely to take my mind off the critical hours that lay ahead, I played to the hilt—for those first three chukkers—and hardly heard at all the admonitions of Cynthia.

But while we sat in the station wagon, an utterly terrifying truth came to me through her words. Suppose I should get hurt? Suppose even the most commonplace accident might happen: a wildly swung mallet hitting me in the face and making a cut, or even a noticeable bruise? Suppose my horse should go down, and I might suffer a genuine sprain, or break! The wounds of Henry Prentiss would not fit well upon the person of Vaughan Dunbar!

I was seized with fright as the realization of my awful mistake came over me. And thereafter, as you have seen, I avoided the slightest chance of a mishap.

It will be obvious that on this day of crisis I had quit the hotel in New York for good.

The background of Vaughan Dunbar there was filled in to the extent which I thought necessary. I knew that his imposture would be discovered sooner or later, and that made no difference to me whatever.

I only needed the delay of two or three days—two or three days in which the hue and cry would

be up for Vaughan Dunbar, fugitive and attention drawn away from Gull Point itself. Two or three days in which it must naturally be assumed that the fleeing man, impostor or not, had ample time to get away and put many miles between himself and the scene of his actions.

The telephone calls I had made to the United Press, the British Embassy and the others were simply to serve this end of delay in tracing Vaughan Dunbar. I had called those places, asked to speak to an unlikely name, and hung up. But the record of the calls at the hotel's switchboard meant that they must be tediously followed up.

The fingerprints were useful to the same purpose. They would have to be checked at many places, the while Vaughan Dunbar was, presumably, running hard. The apparatus I had contrived for making them was a product of my long preparatory labors in California.

In one of my practice roles there—that of an artistic but rather amusing freak—I had taken paraffin casts of the hands of several motion picture actors. From these casts, it had not been difficult to mold their fingerprints in thin, transparent rubber.

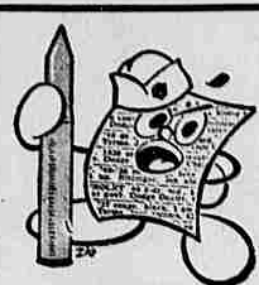
Naturally, I did not wear the finger stalls when I called at Stone House—save for that last time when I left my prints on the pistol. I used them in my hotel room and a noticeable bruise? Suppose my on the car, being careful to leave perfect impressions.

When I did not wear them, I took care to leave no prints where

they might be preserved. Cocktail glasses and highball tumblers would not matter. They would be washed clean very quickly after they were used. And, of course, the fingerprints of Henry Prentiss would appear normally about a house which he visited so frequently.

(To Be Concluded)

Always read the classified ads.



10 CENTS BUYS FIVE CARTRIDGES

Five cartridges might save the lives of five Americans—Might shorten this war by five Japs or five Huns.

I urge you to let me turn your discarded things into War Stamps to buy cartridges to help win this war.

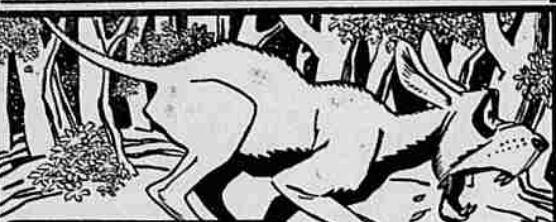
I'm a Herald and News Want Ad, and I'm enlisted for the duration.

Phone me at 3124 and I'll turn YOUR unused things into cartridges!

Herald & News Want-Ads Get Results

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



IN ANCIENT ENGLAND, IF YOU OWNED A BIG DOG AND LIVED WITHIN TEN MILES OF THE KING'S HUNTING PRESERVES, THE DOG'S KNEES WERE CUT TO PREVENT HIS CHASING THE ROYAL GAME!

SMALL DOGS ABLE TO PASS THROUGH A DOG GAUGE. SHOWN BELOW. WERE EXEMPT.

WHAT DID THE FOLLOWING MEN MAKE?

THOMAS CHIPPENDALE, ANTONIO STRADIVARI, WILBUR WRIGHT.



UNFIT NAMES

DORIS WHITEHEAD OF PRESTON, IDAHO, IS A RED HEAD! Thanks Mrs. Paul Merrill, COPIR. 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.

ANSWER: Chippendale, furniture; Stradivari, violins, and Wright, airplanes.

NEXT: Tree ancestor.

INDIAN HOME

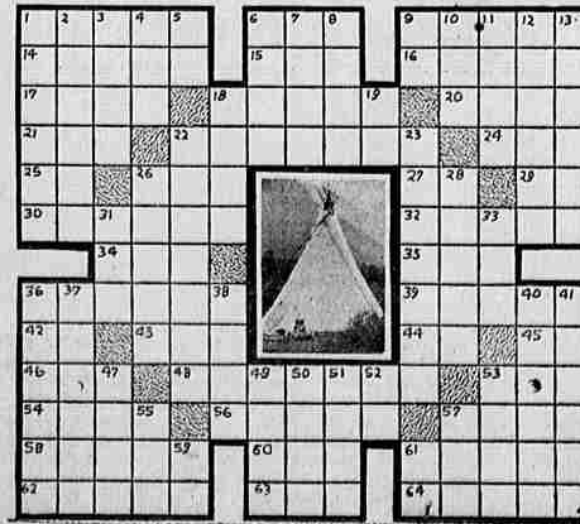
HORIZONTAL

- 1 Pictured Indian home. 6 Disease (med.). 9 Hang. 14 Expunge. 15 Mother (Tag). 16 Was indisposed. 17 Great Lake. 18 Networks (anat.). 20 Hony (comb. form). 21 Put on. 22 It is a tent. 24 Jujube. 25 Lira (abbr.). 26 Sailor (slang). 27 Like. 29 Cloth measure. 30 Landed property. 32 Dish. 34 High in pitch (music). 35 Permit. 36 Current. 39 Aphorism. 42 Area measure.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

JOHNBRICKER PUREEENYEAR HOME TASTE LIES ASPARMONE LAP LITERA KAN W DRY PA LIEP NO PA LAR W DEE O MIND BRICKER GET T H A P B U N S U B T I T L E O I L S M U S E S P E E R D U E S M A R M E L A T R E P U B L I C A I N S

- 18 Mantle. 19 Rough lava. 22 Small house. 23 Scandinavian region. 26 Helmet (Roman). 28 Sleighs. 31 Sailor. 33 Indonesian. 36 Overlord. 37 Experiments. 38 Mountain (Fr.). 40 Lament. 41 Clothes. 42 Croon (Scott.). 2 Mistakes. 3 Ache. 49 Became larger. 50 Opera by Verdi. 51 Driving commands. 52 Editor (abbr.). 53 Clock face. 55 Enlisted (abbr.). 57 Lady, literate in Arts (abbr.). 59 Type measure. 61 Spain (abbr.).



BORN THIRTY YEARS TOO SOON

Out Our Way By J. R. Williams



Red Ryder



Little Orlan Annie



Freckles and His Friends



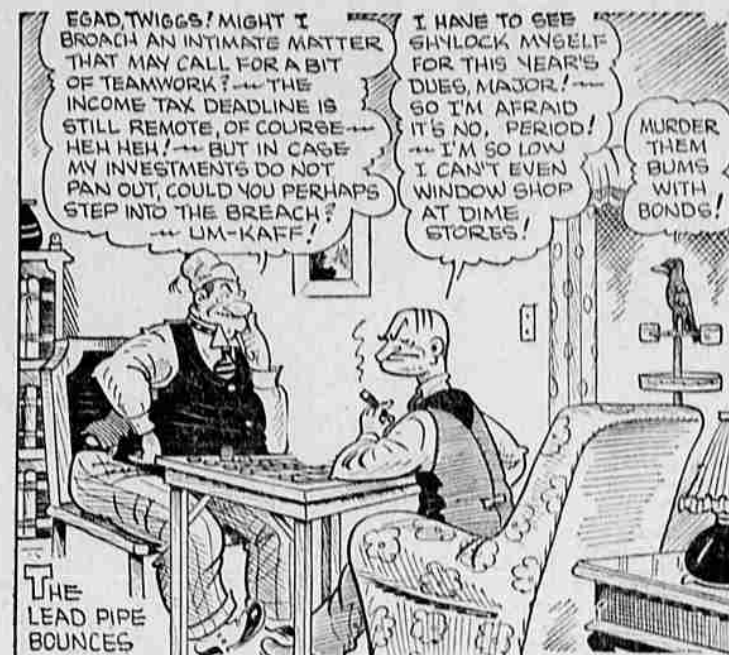
Wash Tubbs



Boots and Her Buddies



Alley Oop



Our Boarding House With Major Hoopie



By Fred Harman



By Harold Gray



By Blossom



By Crano



By Martin



By V. T. Hamlin