

• SERIAL STORY

'I AM A MURDERER'

BY MORRIS MARKEY

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PEACE AT LAST

CHAPTER XXVIII

I HAD carefully prepared for the final vanishment of Vaughan Dunbar in my cottage at Gull Point. It had been a simple matter to dispose of my one servant, a Negro boy of the most elemental character, by letting him fall ill. His indisposition came from the rather generous dose of calomel which I dropped into the highball I mixed for him when in a particularly expansive mood. It was not difficult to persuade him to go to his cot for a few days. It was necessary to work with great swiftness after the game. Though, contrariwise, it was not necessary to prepare the disguise of Vaughan Dunbar with meticulous care. His appearance would be of the briefest time. He would not have to sit and chat beneath the eyes of people. Saving such as he might meet in the library, nobody would see him except from a distance.

And the dismissal of the servant Joseph, of Mitchell Grace, was accomplished while my face was still in the many shadows of that library.

So it was that Vaughan Dunbar stood, at last, alone with Norman Tinker—the sheet of typed paper in his left hand, the pistol in his right-hand coat pocket.

I called out very sharply to attract the attention of the people on the lawn. I held up the sheet of paper, and spoke to Norman Tinker, hardly above a whisper. "You knew me first, Tinker, as Richard Frye. Then, as Henry Prentiss. Goodby."

His eyelids hardly fluttered. Even in that brief instant of knowledge that retribution was upon him, he seemed resigned. Somehow, I believe he always knew that it was to come to him at last.

The breakaway was not difficult. My car had been left at precisely the right spot in the rear grounds. The roads back of Stone House are a maze. I drove at great speed for a few hundred yards—made the critical turn—and then went on at more moderate pace, directly to my own cottage. I put the car in the garage and locked the door, leaving Henry Prentiss's coupe standing innocently in the driveway.

THEN I made quick work of removing Vaughan Dunbar from this world of men. In half an hour, Henry Prentiss was on his way to Stone House—in ample time for a dinner which he well knew would never be served. The clothing and make-up were simply stowed away in a drawer. It was not conceivable that the home of Henry Prentiss would be searched any more than that of the home of Fred West, or any of a score of men would be searched.

The campaign signs which concealed the car and allowed me to dispose of it finally, I regard as my greatest inspiration. I had bought the materials in four or five different places, and painted the signs myself.

When I left Stone House—at 12 o'clock that night—I buried myself first with the final disposition of Vaughan Dunbar's clothing, the lenses, the rubber fingertips. These were cut and broken into small bits, and buried deep in a grave which already had been prepared and which, I assure you, can never be discovered.

Sometime later, I drove the sign-bedecked car in leisurely fashion to Garden City. I parked it, and got out, and started upon a long walk. I did not use the buses that were available, nor attempt hitch-hiker fashion, to attract the attention of passing motorists. I walked. The 10 miles of it. And got home by 4 o'clock.

And was convinced that a wing soul on earth knew that Henry Prentiss was moving about the island that night. You may wish to know why I left the note. There were two reasons. First, I wished to fix the identity of Vaughan Dunbar in the minds of the people who had witnessed the execution. And, second, I thought of Cynthia and I did not know, and do not know now, whether Norman Tinker ever legally adopted her. I did know that if he had made a will leaving his goods to his "daughter"—and if that relationship should ever be challenged, she might be deprived of the wealth that was hers by right. If he had not made a will, the natural assumption that she was his daughter would bring that wealth to her without dispute.

ON the day when Cynthia was to sail away to Hawaii Henry Prentiss sat for the last time with her beside the pool.

She looked for a long moment up across the lawn and toward the house. And she said, "Tell me something."

"Anything I can, pretty."

"What do you think of me?"

"Why, I think you're just about the most—"

"Oh, please. You know I don't mean that. I'm not asking for flattery, and you know it. I mean—really! Because you see, now there just isn't anybody whose opinions I've got to look out for and be careful about—like it was with the Colonel."

"Well, here you are, Miss Pretty, and on the line. I know—I know—that you will never, anywhere on earth, do anything that will make me feel disappointed or unhappy when I hear about— and I'll hear about nearly everything you do, too. You can count on that. And you'd damn well better watch your step."

of Gull Point began packing their bags for the South, it was only natural that he, too, should make plans for leaving. For but a while, of course. He would return. There was still the lease on his cottage. People wanted him to join them, at Palm Beach and Miami and the tarpon waters of the Gulf Coast. But he pleaded that there were other obligations in other waters that could not be denied.

And so Dr. Pendennis Keene was born. And Dr. Pendennis Keene bought himself a yacht. It is a whimsy, of course, this new identity. But somehow amusing. It is of use in passing the time.

Henry Prentiss will go back to Gull Point at appropriate times (when Dr. Pendennis Keene fades into momentary retirement). His visits will be shorter and shorter. Until, finally, Henry Prentiss himself will pass from the scene altogether.

I shall be faithful in my pledge to watch over Cynthia—over the girl who does not know and will never know that she is not Cynthia Merriweather but Cynthia Frye. But it will not really be necessary. For she is in good hands now.

On my table, here, is a letter addressed to Henry Prentiss and forwarded (by rather devious ways) to Pendennis Keene:

"Mitchell Grace and I were married last week. Is it all right?"

Now, I suppose, I must return to my fishing. Manuella has called to say that the big ones are running.

The eye has been offered up for the eye, and the tooth for the tooth. The hot wires have been

cooled, and there is peace at last in my heart. And so Dr. Keene—who is regarded by his fellow yachtmen and fishermen of the turquoise bay as such a hospitable fellow—will presently obey Manuella, and up anchor, and bait his hooks for more commonplace quarry than, time since, he was wont to pursue.

THE END

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



SOUNDING BALLOONS CARRYING SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS HAVE REACHED ALTITUDES OF 115,000 FEET... OR 22 MILES.



DUCK GROWS DOWN AS IT GROWS UP, SAYS MRS. LEO C. STALEY, Hillsboro, Wisconsin.

TREES ARE HELD SACRED BY MANY PRIMITIVE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH, WHO BELIEVE MANKIND ORIGINATED FROM TREES.

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NEXT: Where did garden bees get their name?

FAMOUS AUTHOR

Table with crossword puzzle clues and answers. Includes words like 'TEPEE', 'MIL', 'DRAPE', 'ERASE', 'TINA', 'AILED', 'ERIE', 'RETIA', 'MELI', 'DON', 'CONTICAL', 'ELB', 'LR', 'GOB', 'AIS', 'EL', 'EISTATE', 'PLATE', 'ALT', 'LET', 'STREAM', 'ADAGE', 'AR', 'AGO', 'NS', 'RN', 'TIP', 'ENGAGED', 'DID', 'RARE', 'TRIED', 'LIVE', 'ALONE', 'EIDE', 'SLAVE', 'PISALM', 'WAS', 'PALES', '70 Showers', 'VERTICAL', '1 Chain part', '2 At one time', '3 Note in Guido's scale', '4 Electrified particle', '5 Stigma', '6 Sun god', '7 Smells', '8 Deserve', '9 Inches (abbr.)', '10 Zils English (abbr.)', '11 Tardy', '12 Let fall', '13 Old card game', '14 Upon', '20 Editor (abbr.)', '23 Affirmative', '26 Tablet', '28 Creep furtively', '31 Prying sneak', '32 Footed vase', '33 Born', '34 Skill', '35 Hostelry', '36 Anger', '37 Be sick', '43 Sailor', '44 Man's name', '46 Large tub', '50 Nude', '51 Furtive (Roman)', '52 Proceed', '53 Metal fasteners', '57 Printer's measures', '58 Portuguese money of account', '59 Writing tool', '60 Lawrence (abbr.)', '61 Beverage', '64 Any', '66 Verso (abbr.)', '68 Palm lily.



THE GREAT CLOSED-IN SPACES 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 Cram



Boots and Her Buddies By Martin



Alley Oop By V. T. Hamlin



THE CHATTER MAY WARM HIM UP Our Boarding House With Major Hoople



A CHECK, HUH? BUT HOW CAN YUH EXPLAIN ALL THESE BILLS FROM PINE GULCH? I-I CAN'T, SHERIFF!



HAROLD GRAY By Harold Gray



GOSH! By Blosser



WHY, OF COURSE NOT By Cram



EITHER HIM OR MY PIGGIES HAS GOTTA GO MY! I'VE NEVER SEEN PUG SO STUDIOUS BEFORE By Martin



SAY, MOTHER, IS LINK YOUR BROTHER? THEN HOW CAN HE OUR UNCLE BE OH, DON'T BE SILLY, RUN ALONG AND PLAY NO BRUSH-OFFS NOW, IT JUST WON'T GO HE AIN'T POP'S BROTHER THAT WE KNOW BECAUSE, YOU SEE, HE SAID SO! By V. T. Hamlin