

THE DESERT MOON MYSTERY

BY KAY CLEAVER STRAHAN

Her voice, when she spoke next, came muffled from where she had hidden her face in her curved arm on the back of the chair. "Uncle Sam is not John's father," she said. "What do you mean by that?"

"John is uncle's adopted son. They are so different, so utterly different, they could not be father and son."

"Maybe not," I said, trying to keep pleasant, for I did not want to be snapping at the poor child on this day, "but no real son loved his father better than John loves Sam. He all but worships him, and he has ever since he was a little fellow."

"I know. I know. Sometimes I think John cares more for uncle than he does for me. Mary, tell me, honestly. Do you think John loves me as much as he loves Uncle Sam?"

It is hard to explain; but, ever since we had begun to speak of Sam, I had had a fighting feeling, as if I were warding off danger; so I was right down relieved to have the conversation take this silly turn.

"Love," I told her, "though, mercy knows, I know little enough about it, can't be measured with a pint cup like flour. But John is a good, normal boy. That means that his sweetheart comes first with him; first and last."

"I—don't know," she answered. "I should hate to have John have to choose between uncle and me."

"That is foolish talk. Why should John ever have to choose between you and Sam?"

She sighed and shook her head. A sudden certainty came to me. Whatever it was that Danny had refused that morning to tell me, whatever it was that she had said that she dared not tell, had had something, somehow, to do with Sam.

I did not urge her again to tell me what it was. I did not wish her to know. I sat there, dumb, trying to think of some decent excuse that would take me away from her and from that room, and from the need of fighting; fighting, not in a fog, but the fog itself, trying to fell nothingness with a blow, trying to catch smoke in a trap. My dull wits worked too slowly. She began, again, to speak.

CHAPTER XXIV
Clues

What I can not understand," she said, "is that Gaby knew that she might be killed. And yet, so far as anyone knows, she did not do one thing to save herself. If only, only she had confided in me! Surely I could have found some way to help her—to save her."

"You know, dear," I said. "I think that Gaby was not—well, at least not doing any clear thinking, those last few days."

"I know. I thought it was only her disappointment. But now—Who could be quite sane with such a fear confronting her? Yet—she left all of her things in order; as if, deliberately, she prepared for death. She burned her papers and letters. See—" Danny pointed to the fireplace.

I crossed the room and looked into it. Papers had recently been burned there. I took the poker and stirred in the fluttering, black bits; but nothing had escaped the flames. I hung the poker back in the rack with shovel and tongs and bellows. It did not catch on its hook. As I bent to fix it, I saw a little white circle, down in the corner of the stand. I stooped and picked it up. It was a tiny round of celluloid, with the letter "Q" printed on it.

"It is one of the caps for her typewriter keys," Danny re-

plied to my question. "She put them over the keys; softer for her finger tips, or saved her finger nails—something of the sort."

"I wonder why she burned them?" I said.

"Do you think that she did?"

"Well, this one being here on the hearth—"

"It probably rolled there, sometime, when she was taking them off her machine."

"Why did she take them off, if she always used them?"

"I don't know."

"Shall we, I suggested, "look and see whether the others are where she kept them?"

Danny opened the desk drawer. "They aren't here, at any rate," she said, and came back to me, and reached out her hand for the little cap, and turned it over in her fingers. "It could mean only," she said, "what we knew before. That she expected death. That she tried to leave everything tidy and in order."

"I don't know," I objected. "It seems more than orderly, to have taken these off the machine and burned them. It seems right down queer."

She smiled a little pitying smile at me, and patted my shoulder. "Poor Mary," she said.

"Well," I tried to defend myself, "in all the mystery stories that I ever read it was always some stray, meaningless little thing that solved the mystery in the end. A criminal never was discovered without any clues, was he?"

"I believe," she said, "that you are the only one in the house who hasn't looked at what Gaby had in her bag—"

She walked to the table by the window. I followed her. I dreaded seeing that bag again; but I was curious about its contents. It was lying limp on the table.

She picked it up, brushed it flickeringly with the tips of her fingers, and blew on it, as if she were trying to blow something off of it. "Everything," she explained, "sticks to the little pointed beads."

I took it from her and looked at it closely; but I could see no speck of ash, no minute particle of tobacco, nor of dust on its pattern of parrots, tree branches, and flowers.

"It is a beautiful thing," I said.

"Gaby got it in Vienna."

"I've wondered," I said, "why it was that Gaby had all the beautiful, expensive things, such as this. Your clothes are pretty and tasty, but they aren't near the quality of Gaby's."

She hesitated a moment before answering. "I have been in England for the past eight years, while Gaby has been on the continent, where beautiful things are more plentiful, and cheaper."

"Lands alive! I thought you girls had lived together, all these years."

"No," she said, and picked up Gaby's cigaret case, and handed it to me.

It was made of a dull gold, with her monogram, "G. C." set in tiny black opals, with green and blue lights flickering in them as if they were alive.

I opened the case. It was full of cigarets, except for a space at one side, where about two of the pesky little things would have fitted in.

"And, see," Danny said, opening the gold match-box that was like the cigaret case, "it is quite empty. It doesn't seem reasonable that she would start out with an empty match-box. I believe that she used the matches to smoke the cigarets."

"She wouldn't have used a box of matches to light two cigarets."

"She may have shared her

matches with another person, who was smoking."

"Likely she had only a few of these short matches," I said. Sam would use about as many matches as that box would hold to get rid of one pipeful of tobacco.)

I picked up another little gold box. It had powder, rouge, lipstick, and a mirror in it. I had seen it often enough before. I put it back on the table, and took up a beaded coin purse that matched the large bag. It was entirely empty.

"Isn't it queer that that should be empty?" Danny asked. "And her bill-fold is missing. She surely would not start to go anywhere with not a cent of money. Doesn't it look as if she had been robbed?"

"Only," I said, "if anyone had robbed her, why would he have left the valuable gold cigaret case, and vanity case, and match-box?"

"He might have thought they would be hard to dispose of."

I stood silent, thinking and shaking my head.

"Mary," Danny's voice, always low, grew lower still with her intensity, "there is one thing that no one has thought of Daniel Cannadano could have reached here from California in a few hours, by aeroplane."

"I had thought of that. But, Danny, no aeroplane ever came within twenty miles of the ranch without every man-jack of us hearing it, and rushing out with our heads tipped back to gaze at it. Aeroplanes aren't stealthy things, you know, that people can slip up in, and slip off again."

"But, on the third of July, two aeroplanes passed over, going to the Telko celebration."

"On the third," I reminded her, "as advertised. And you know how much noise they made. And how we all went out and watched them, from tiny specks in the south until they were tiny specks and lost in the north again."

She shook her head, and drooped her shoulders with a sigh.

I picked up a little red handkerchief. It was crumpled in a ball; if I ever saw a handkerchief that had been cried into, and turned to a dry spot, and squeezed, and cried into again, it was that little red wad. It was dry now, of course; exposed to the air in this altitude. I wondered whether it had been dry when it had come out of the bag. It was a question not to be asked; so I dropped the handkerchief on the table, certain, only, that the fastidious Gabrielle had never started out with a handkerchief in that condition in her Vienna bag, and picked up the carved ivory cigaret holder. It fell to pieces in my fingers.

"Was this broken in her bag?" I questioned.

"Yes. Snapped in two. And she loved it."

I fitted the pieces together again, on the table, and took up a folded sheet of paper, and opened it, and read:

"Glorious Gaby: Be a good sport. Be a darling. Be game—that is, be Gaby, and meet me this afternoon, around four thirty, in the cabin. H. H."

"Well!" I said.

Yes, I know," Danny answered, "but Hubert Hand swears that he wrote that note several days ago. Too, we know that he was playing chess with Uncle Sam at half-past four."

"He could have gone to the cabin later, when the men went to do the chores. Or was he right with Sam and Chad all the time?"

"I suppose so. He must have satisfied the coroner's jury, at the inquest, of his innocence. Mary," her voice went all tense again, "does it seem to you that the jury was very readily satisfied?"

Perhaps this would be as good a place as any to explain that this tale is not being written to prove that Mary Magin was, or is, a wise, clever, or smart woman. As I have

said before, and will say again, from the beginning to the very end I was a fool. I made mistakes, over and over; and, as will be told, I made a disastrous mistake in the end. If I had been blind, deaf and dumb, I could not have been as big a fool; for then, all the time, I should not have been imagining that I saw things, which I did not see; heard things, which I did not hear; and I should have been obliged to keep my clattery old tongue quiet. The only virtue I can claim, concerning this story, is that if I were a vain or a conceited person, I should never have written it.

I spoke sharply, too sharply to her in answer to what I had imagined I had seen in her attitude. "Never mind about the jury being easily satisfied. Sam is not going to be. He told me this morning that he would find the murderer if it took every dollar he had in the world to do it. Sam is going to get to the bottom of this. Be sure of that."

"I—wonder," she said.

"What do you wonder?"

"Mary!" she exclaimed, close to a reproach, "I merely wonder whether or not Uncle Sam will succeed."

I looked at her brown eyes, all red and swollen from tears, and at the deep, dark circles under them, and I was ashamed.

CHAPTER XXV

I put my arm around her shoulders and drew her close to me. "Honey," I said, "forgive your old Mary. We are all overstrung, overwrought. I didn't mean to speak so sharply."

"There is nothing to forgive, dear," she said. "But—I don't understand. What did I say, or do, that made you feel like being cross to me?"

"Nothing," I told her. "I'm all on edge—that's all."

"I know. Were you looking for something else, on the table? There was nothing else in her bag."

"I was wondering," I said, "about that foreign looking letter she got on the second of July. Did she burn it, with the other things?"

"Oddly, she didn't. I found it in her desk; or, rather beneath her typewriter. Either she forgot about it; or knew that none of us could read it."

"It was written in a foreign language?"

"No. In code. Here it is."

Code, indeed! When I took it from its envelope, this is what met my eyes.

"Paexzalytp! f-y nyx ogrgr-ago, rn fgao atf jan j-asn, ahzgo zkg c-. ahhalo, vkgt nyx clpizgf rg zkg kypulzae, zkaz nyx palf, vlzk nyxo lrizazgf r-ya e-lpa pleg, "pyoon, yef fgao, l-rafg—"

I have copied only the first lines on the first page.

There were four sleazy pages, all closely typewritten. Not a scratch of handwriting on it. What I judged to be the signature, was "Srlsl."

"Do you know who wrote this?" I asked.

"I am sure, if I dare be sure of anything; that it was written by a man names Lewis Bauermont."

I counted the letters of "Lewis" on my fingers. Five. The number of letters in the signature, "Srlsl."

"If he signed his name Lewis," I said then "S' would be 'L,' and 'l' would be 'e' and so on. Get a pencil, dear. Let's see if we can work it out."

She came and looked over my shoulder at the jumbled letters.

"No," she said, "you see, the letter 's' comes twice in the last word, and there are no duplicate letters in Lewis. I am sure it will be more difficult than any substitution of letters. I don't know anything about codes; but I have a notion that the letters are mere symbols of something else—numbers perhaps, that work out with a key quotation."

"I'm going to have a try at my idea, anyway," I insisted.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

eventually they do, but the individual who incurs demand loans against his stock holdings becomes victimized by prevailing short-term conditions. The marginal speculator cannot wait until the long run. That is perhaps why the average individual should shun speculation and seek instead to build up an estate gradually in accordance with the slow but sure working of the compound interest table, which is always on the side of the thrifty.

Q. What race do the Moors belong to? T. E. C.

A. The present day Moors are a mixture of the Mauri, Numidians, Phoenicians, Romans and Arabs.

Mule Driver's Remarks
Started Big "Ruction"

There had been a fight in an estaminet in Vaucoleurs between some regular soldiers and some members of one of the new divisions. After the M. P.'s had stopped the hullaboo it appeared that Private Slim Gibbs, who was a mule driver in the Eighteenth Infantry wagon train and did not like recruits, had knocked the new division in this wise:

"Yes, sir," said Slim, "they landed at St. Nazaire and on their arm brassards was a roarin' tearin' wild animal—a grizzly b'ar—with claws a foot long and spittin' like a wildcat."

"When they got up near Bar le Duc that animal had lost his claws and he stopped spittin'! When they hit Beaumont, behind Seicheprey, that ferce animal was just sittin' down, lookin' around kind of peaceful like."

"And, soldiers, when one of their motor artillery batteries passed us on the way to the front, that b'ar had disappeared and they had a dove on their brassards and the words: 'Let us have peace.'"

Then the fight began.—Ted F. Smith in Philadelphia Public Ledger.

Exaggeration

Ivy Lee, who visited Soviet Russia in the Rockefeller interests, was congratulated at a luncheon in New York, on the excellent book he has written about his visit.

"My book at least has corrected some exaggerations," Mr. Lee said. "We don't want Sovietism here, of course, but its horrors have been exaggerated."

"Russian Sovietism has been treated like the Russian cockroach. A traveler, you know, said of this insect:

"The Russian cockroach is seven inches long. He is hairy and grows like a dog when disturbed. He drops from the ceiling onto the dinner table, and will carry off a chop, a leg of chicken or a bottle of vodka."

French Glove Industry

For centuries the French glove manufacturing industry has not only supplied practically the entire local demand, but exported to nearly all countries of the world. The average value of the annual exports is 175,000,000 francs, as compared with corresponding imports of about 1,000,000 francs. The principal centers of production are Grenoble, Millau and St. Julien, in the southeastern part of France and Niort (Deux-Sèvres) and Chaumont (Haute-Marne), United States Department of Commerce reports.

Whale Leather Gloves Out

Women of Europe are again finding the whale an aid to their wardrobe. Whale "leather" is being used in making fashionable gloves, and style leaders have approved the new material composed of the intestines of the huge swimmers. The new gloves are delicately soft, but so tough that it is almost impossible to wear them out. The whale has not contributed to women's style since the days of the whalebone for corsets.

Mexican Sentimental Song

The song known as the "Home, Sweet Home" of Mexico is "La Golondrina," by Sarradell. The translation of this is "The Swallow." It has been sung for many years, and it is referred to as the "Home, Sweet Home" of Mexico, as it is generally played as the concluding number of a dance or other festivity.

Trade and Barter

Larkes—I'm getting divorced. You wouldn't want to lease my apartment?

Sparkes—Yes, surely, I'm getting married. You wouldn't want to buy my club membership?

Seeking a Bargain


Miss Snipe—I wonder why Maud gave her age as twenty-five when she married that rich old man?

Miss Snapps—Oh, I suppose she made a discount for cash!—Stray Stories.

Wealth in experience doesn't bring happiness, either; often, only a kind of dreary wisdom.

Long life is denied us; let us therefore do something to show that we have lived.—Cicero.

They never fall who die in a great cause.—Byron.



CHILDREN CRY FOR IT—

CHILDREN hate to take medicine as a rule, but every child loves the taste of Castoria. And this pure vegetable preparation is just as good as it tastes; just as bland and just as harmless as the recipe reads.

When Baby's cry warns of colic, a few drops of Castoria has him soothed, asleep again in a jiffy. Nothing is more valuable in diarrhea. When coated tongue or bad breath tell of constipation, invoke its gentle aid to cleanse and regulate a child's bowels. In colds or children's diseases, you should use it to keep the system from clogging.

Castoria is sold in every drug store; the genuine always bears Chas. H. Fletcher's signature.

Fletcher's CASTORIA


Pet Peeve

We hate the man who says, "Yes, you are right, in a general way, but this case is an exception."—Atchafalaya Globe.

Never hit a man when he's got you down.


Rheumatism?

Quick relief from rheumatic pains without harm:



To relieve the worst rheumatic pain is a very easy matter. Bayer Aspirin will do it every time! It's something you can always take. Genuine Aspirin tablets are harmless. Look for the Bayer Cross on each tablet.

BAYER ASPIRIN



After Nervous Breakdown

"I had a nervous breakdown and could not do the work I have to do around the house. Through one of your booklets I found how Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound had helped other women and I went to the drug store and got me six bottles. It has done me good in more ways than one and now I work every day without having to lie down. I will answer all letters with pleasure."—Hannah M. Eversmeyer, 707 N-16 Street, East St. Louis, Illinois.

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

Lydia E. Pinkham Med. Co., Lowell, Mass.

Sioux City Ptg. Co., No. 31-1930.

A good judge of human nature is not so foolish as to find too much fault with it.

Don't Scratch

Here's the sure, quick, easy way to kill all mosquitoes indoors and keep 'em away outdoors!

FLIT

Spray clean smelling



Kills Flies Mosquitoes Warts Bed Bugs Roaches Ants

because its stinkless vapor KILLS QUICKER

The World's Largest Selling Insect Killer

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Faith Will Return

Mezzyle S. Ruker, in the New York American.

In the present situation, all the mechanical facilities of production and distribution are unimpaired. The potential consuming power of the people is high. Superlatively low interest rates constitute an incentive to boldness. The chief defect is psychological and consists of a lapse of confidence.

Faith will return, but until it does the volume of trade will continue to be compressed. The current statistics of production and distribution reflect the widespread human tendency to retrench and to wait to see what will happen. The return

to prosperity could be heightened by courageous leadership.

Meanwhile, time on the side of recovery, for there has been a more marked falling off in production than in consumption. The result has been a gradual tendency to eat into accumulated stocks—not only into the stocks of merchandise held by manufacturers and retailers, but also into the invisible inventory which consumers accumulated during the last boom on the installment plan.

Stock prices in their recent decline reflect the tendency of the public to exaggerate the immediately visible present. What has recently occurred is precisely the obverse of

what took place in the latter phases of the prolonged bull market. When business was booming amateur financiers acted on the assumption that "it ain't gonna rain no more."

And of late lay speculators have assumed that the sun of prosperity would never shine again. Of course, the true investment worth of stocks depends largely on their average potential earning power over a period of years, not on prospects for profits in the next quarter.

UBI stock prices reflect collective psychological moods over short periods, even more than analytical merit. The outright cash buyer is in position to wait until fundamentals govern stock quotations, as

eventually they do, but the individual who incurs demand loans against his stock holdings becomes victimized by prevailing short-term conditions. The marginal speculator cannot wait until the long run. That is perhaps why the average individual should shun speculation and seek instead to build up an estate gradually in accordance with the slow but sure working of the compound interest table, which is always on the side of the thrifty.

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