

THE DESERT MOON MYSTERY

BY KAY CLEAVER STRAHAN

Sam growled at him to shut up; and told John that it was his turn to talk, and to go ahead and try to talk sense, if possible.

"I don't know where to begin," John said. "I've got nothing to talk about."

"Begin at the beginning. What did Gaby say to you, after dinner, that made you decide, right off, to go to Rattall?"

"I've told you that already. I've got no changes to make in it. Gaby told me, after dinner, that Danny's headache was getting worse. She said that Danny had sent to Salt Lake for a certain kind of headache medicine, the only kind that ever did her any good. She said it should have come in the morning's mail. She said that Danny would be peeved at her for telling me about it—asking me to go, that is. So, if I didn't want a fuss, and wanted to be allowed to go, I'd better make a sneak of it, with no explanations. I did. Here is something I haven't told, though, for Danny just told me, when we came in here at three. She hadn't sent for any headache medicine to Salt Lake, nor anywhere. That certainly looks as if Gaby wanted to get either me, or the sedan, off the job and out of the way, yesterday afternoon. She must have had some reason for sending me on a fool's errand like that."

"Well, well, go on, son," Sam said, after we had all sat in dead silence for about a minute.

"Go on where?" John asked. "I've got nothing more to say. Hand's told the rest of it, hasn't he?"

"Answer him you fool," Sam roared. "You've got answers, haven't you? Use 'em. Sitting there like a dummy! Did anyone see you towing Saule to his place?"

"Not that I know of. I towed him all right; but I can't prove it. Hand was right when he said he could be bought for a half dollar. He might come cheaper. I'd try him with a quarter, first Hand."

"Good God!" Sam shouted. "What are you trying to do? Pry your way into the lethal chamber? Can you give a reason for driving to the back door, instead of leaving the car in the garage?"

"Only two hundred-pound sacks of rock salt. They'd dumped them on the platform for us this morning from Eighteen. I could give a reason for bringing them up, instead of leaving them there until we went down with the truck. Sure, I'm full of reasons. Got a good reason for taking half an hour to bathe and dress. It would be hard to find a guy with more reasons than I can produce for everything—all, but murdering the twin sister of the girl I love."

"Son," Sam said, "I don't blame you a damn bit for being sore clear to the bone. But, come to that, we haven't any right to blame Hand, here, either; not if he is honest in his suspicions, and, maybe, he is. I forced them out of him. Can't you swallow your pride, for a while, and—"

"I've swallowed it already," John said, "if that's what you want. Swallowed it till I'm choked with it."

"I know, I know. But it is like this, John—and this goes for all you folks, too—a person can't get to the bottom of anything without going down. In this case, it looks like we were going to have to go pretty low down—a trip to hell for most of us, I reckon. But it will be a round trip. Most of us will come up clean, to a clean Desert Moon. Can't we go

down, then, like a lot of reasonable human beings, and not like a kennel of yapping dogs?"

"It won't hold, dad," John answered. "Not this round trip to hell" stuff, as human beings. If I hadn't stopped being a human being; that is, a man, I wouldn't have sat still here and let Hand have his say out. And I wouldn't have done it, not to save my own neck. But I know how you feel about the ranch. I've gone through with it for that reason, and—for Danny, though I know that all of this rotten mistake on your part, I know that; but it is no use telling you, now that you've started. I'll go on with it, the best I can. I guess the others will, too. But none of us will come up clean, as you say. Don't look for that—not after this muck. All right. Hop to it, dad. What's your next question?"

I was relieved when Sam asked, "Do you suspect, with reason, anyone in this room?" I had thought, following right along with Hubert Hand's accusations, as Sam had been doing, that his next question would be about what was troubling and bothering John when he came in. Why he had acted so queerly that he had had to explain it by saying he was loco from the sun.

"I do not," John answered Sam's question, straight. "But it seems darn queer to me the way everyone is leaving Chad's suicide out of this. Hold on, dad! I'm not saying that I think Chad killed her. I know he didn't. But I know just as well that he didn't walk out and shoot himself simply because he had loved Gaby. Chad was a queer bird, all right. I guess none of us understood him very well. He was as emotional as the deuce, too—I'll grant that. But he was not, ever, a damn fool."

"John!" Danny interrupted. "Do you think that a man who kills himself, when he finds that the girl he loves has been cruelly murdered, needs to be a fool?"

"Yes," John answered. "A man might not care much about living, after that, but if he killed himself he'd be a fool. I mean—it is like this. Regular fellows, and Chad sure was one, don't walk out and kill themselves, when they find the girl they love is dead. It takes more than death to make a real man kill himself. Sounds like a book, I know; but loss of honor is a reason, and shame—maybe that's the same thing—is another reason. Or, a fellow might kill himself to save the honor of his girl—or to save a friend's life, if he owed the friend a lot."

Danny interrupted again. "Absolute despair should be a reason—"

"Sure, I know how you mean. But Chad had despaired of Gaby's love long ago. Dozens of times I've seen her treat him so rottenly that, if he had been the suicidal sort, he would have killed himself right then. No sir, I tell you Chad did not shoot himself because Gaby was dead. Sure, that was a part of it; but not the main part."

"Chad was a darn good guy. Good all the way through. We all know that he didn't kill her. We'd know it, if dad didn't have his alibis for him. But what I'm getting at is, that, somehow or other, and not meaning to at all, he got himself mixed up in it. When he saw what had happened, and realized that he had been involved—There's your reason, all right. I think that, if we can find out why Chad shot himself, we'll find out most of the other things we want to know. I'm through,

dad. I've said all I've got to say, and more too."

Sam hesitated a minute. I was relieved to see him take Chad's note out of his pocket. "Chad says that he killed her," he said, and read the note aloud. Everyone but me, to whom it was no surprise, and Martha, who was almost asleep again, squeaked, or gasped, or otherwise showed their horrified astonishment.

John spoke first. "I'll bet four dollars he never wrote it."

Sam passed the paper to him. "It looks like his writing. It sounds like him too. Soon as I can get track of one of these what-you-may-call-em's hand writing experts, I'm going to send it to him. I reckon it will match up all right. I wish there was an expert of some kind that we could send it to, to find out why he wrote it."

"Uncle Sam," Danny said, and I could see that the note had upset her pretty badly. "There is something no one has thought of. We haven't had time to think. But, where was Chad during the hour we were hunting for Gaby? You, and John, and Mary and I were in the sedan. But where were the others, during that time; between seven and eight o'clock, wasn't it?"

"I reckon," Sam spoke real gently to her, "that we have all had time to do some tall thinking about that hour, little girl. But there couldn't be any doubt that Gaby had been dead a sight longer than an hour, when we found her."

"But can you know that, for a certainty?" Danny insisted. "Just as certain as I know that she was dead, Danny. I—Well, in the early days here—Never mind that, though. I've had experience with deaths, kind of on that order. I know. The coroner and the sheriff knew. But, she might have been brought into the house during that hour. Hand let loose on his alibi business a little too early—"

"I'm no fool," Hubert Hand interrupted. "You admit that she could have been murdered during the hour between six and seven. Every one of us, except John, can account for every minute of our time from four o'clock, when we saw Gaby alive, up to seven."

"All right, all right," Sam said. "Have it your own way. But you've had your say, and plenty of time to say it in. You'll maybe have another turn later. Now, keep still. We are going to hear from the others."

"It is your turn next, Danny, I'm sorry. You understand, we haven't any time to lose. Take it easy, though. Do you suspect, with reason, anyone in this room of being connected with the murder?"

CHAPTER XXIX

Danny

I thing, Danny said, "that Chad did it."

Sam lowered his brows, and turned those blue searchlights of his on her. "That is a bad beginning, my girl," he said, kindly enough, though. "You don't think that. Not for a minute. Better start over again."

"Uncle Sam," she pleaded, "listen. You spoke about clearing everyone's name, and about the honor of the Desert Moon. Chad's confession does that—does all of it. Why not let well enough alone?"

My own words; but I had not expected to hear them from Danny. The only reason for them seemed to be that Hubert Hand had frightened her with his case against John. Was she the sort of girl who would keep on loving John, and marry him, if she thought that he had killed her sister? I did not believe it.

John said, "Danny!" And, knowing as little as I do about being loved, I knew that I should hate to have my sweetheart pronounce my name with a pinch of horror, and a pinch of anger, and a big dash of bewilderment, as John had pronounced hers.

Sam said, "Somebody else suggested that to-day, Danny. I told them that there was no question of well enough while

the man who had murdered your sister was going about alive, and while his helper was keeping his secret on the Desert Moon."

"You said that?" Danny questioned, and gave us all another severe shock by accenting the pronoun.

"I said that, yes," Sam showed signs of rising dander. "And I thought that you, if anyone, more than anyone would agree with me."

"Only," she answered, "I should rather let a guilty person go free, escape, than to persecute an innocent person."

"No innocent person is going to be persecuted on the Desert Moon," Sam said, "and no guilty one is going to escape, either. You're going to be a good, sensible girl, too, and answer a few questions I want to ask you."

"First thing I want to know is, what was it that you girls were hunting for, all the time here on the ranch?"

"We had been told," Danny answered, "that there was a very large sum of money hidden here on this place. We came to get it. That is—Gaby did. I mean—before we left the continent I knew that I wanted to stay here, for a long time. I cared much more about staying here, and keeping Gaby here, than I cared about finding the money. Really, I—I hoped not to find the money. The people with whom I had been living in England had broken up their home there. I had no home. That is how I happened to be in Switzerland, with Gaby—I—"

She broke down, and hid her face in her hands. We all sat, quietly, and waited.

With her face still covered she appealed to Sam. "Uncle, I can't tell all this, to-day, I can't. I loved Gaby. I did love her. If she were alive—But she isn't. Please, please don't force me to go on with this."

"You've got me wrong, Danny," Sam said, "I didn't expect you to tell about all of your past lives, and that. But this stuff now about money hidden here. Could it have any bearing on the murder?"

She shook her head. "I think not. Not possible. There was no money here, anyway, as it turned out. That is—if Gaby told me the truth about anything. I thought that she did. But now—she spoke of keeping fear and dread from me, in her last note to me. I—I can't talk of this, to-day, I tell you!"

"See here, dad," John spoke up, "Danny isn't fit to go through with this to-day. I think she has told me everything she has to tell. She told me most of it this morning. I've got it straight. How about allowing me to go on with it?"

"Do you think any of it might have a bearing on the murder?"

"Yes, I think it might."

Sam banged on the table with his fist. "By God," he roared, "what kind of people have I got to deal with? Not five minutes ago, you sat there and swore that you had told everything you know. Couldn't even begin. Couldn't think of a thing to say. No suspicions. No hints of any kind, except a slur at a dead boy. Now you come out with this. By the Lord, Hand, you may be a better man than I think you are—"

Danny's voice cut in like scissors slithering through taffeta silk. "Be careful, there," she said. I remembered the way she had brushed the beaded bag. Something cold went trailing down my backbone. It was time, and past, I thought, for me to take a hand.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

CROWN FOR 'BEAN KING'
Trinidad, Colo.—A silver crown, to be retained as long as he holds the title of pinto, "bean king," will be presented this summer to the Las Animas county farmer who produces the most pinto beans to the acre.

MANY HORSES KILLED
Howard, S. D.—More than 25 horses were killed by the heat in Miner county, County Agent S. W. Jones reported. The hot winds and lack of rain caused small grain to ripen early and brought about an early harvest.

sentiment and sentimentality, admiring the one and despising the other.

3.—Teach me neither to proffer nor to receive cheap praise.

4.—If I am called upon to suffer, let me be like a well-bred beast that goes away to suffer in silence.

5.—Teach me to win, if I may; if I may not, teach me to be a good loser.

6.—Teach me neither to cry for the moon nor to cry for split milk.

This code is worthy of any honorable gentleman, and it is said the king adheres closely to it.

Experiments at Michigan State college show that pigeons and pheasants are susceptible as carriers of Bang's disease.

Childish Marvels in Arithmetic "Fade Out"

An English newspaper gives particulars of the case of a two-year-old Belgian boy, Andre Lenoir, who is able to multiply accurately any two five-figure numbers without hesitation. His is not the only case of phenomenal power in this direction—usually lost as soon as a real knowledge of mathematics is gained. One of these calculating boys was George Parker Bidder, who was exhibited in his childhood as an arithmetical marvel. He became an engineer and was associated with Robert Stephenson. He was a founder of the Electric Telegraph company and became president of the Institution of Civil Engineers. Another wizard who could do anything with figures was Jaques Inaudi, who visited London in 1893. He did not lose his gift as he grew up.

Concertina's Centenary

The concertina celebrated its centenary last year. It was invented and patented by Charles—afterward Sir Charles—Wheatstone in 1829. He must have been a wonderful man, for his inventions seem to have been legion. Sir Charles invented for example, the stereoscope, by which the appearance of solidity is obtained through the mental combination of two pictures, and the polar clock, which made it possible to tell the time by the light from the sky although the sun might be invisible. It was he who made the electric telegraph available for the public transmission of messages. And in between his scientific studies he sandwiched the invention of our little musical friend the concertina.

More Freethinkers

The German Freethinkers' society on its twenty-fifth anniversary asserts more than 52,000 persons joined last year, bringing the roster of the movement to 600,000. It was said that in Berlin alone 6,000 persons severed connections with the churches.

Speeches

"Do you think that a man's political influence depends on his ability as a public speaker?"

"Not altogether," answered Senator Sorghum. "I have found that the speeches which sometimes counted for most were made in strictest privacy."

Lack of Acquaintance

"Why do you insist on despising wealth?"

"Perhaps," said the man with artistic temperament, "it's because I never got well enough acquainted with it to know its good qualities."

Advance Worrying

Bride—I feel sad, sort of.

Groom—What's troubling you, sweetheart?

Bride (wistfully)—Dear, would you get married again if I divorced you?—Life.

Promises With Reservations

His Mother—Bobbie, you have been very naughty after promising to obey me strictly.

Bobby—That's nothin'. You once promised to obey dad.

Got One Thing Honestly

Jim—Can you rely on Jones?

Bill—They say that the only thing he ever acquired honestly was the grippe he's down with now.—Brooklyn Eagle.

There is at least certainty in the anticipation of pleasure if not in the realization.

The cotton industry has some part to play in more than one-fourth of America's business activities.

The man with too much common sense misses a lot of fun.



When Food Sours

Lots of folks who think they have "indigestion" have only an acid condition which could be corrected in five or ten minutes. An effective anti-acid like Phillips Milk of Magnesia soon restores digestion to normal.

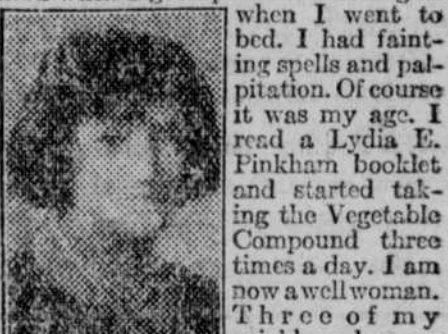
Phillips does away with all that sourness and gas right after meals. It prevents the distress so apt to occur two hours after eating. What a pleasant preparation to take! And how good it is for the system! Unlike a burning dose of soda—which is but temporary relief at best—Phillips Milk of Magnesia neutralizes many times its volume in acid. Next time a hearty meal, or too rich a diet has brought on the least discomfort, try—

PHILLIPS Milk of Magnesia

TIRED WHEN SHE GOT UP

Strengthened by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

St. Paul, Minn.—"I used to be as tired when I got up in the morning as when I went to bed. I had fainting spells and palpitation. Of course it was my age. I read a Lydia E. Pinkham booklet and started taking the Vegetable Compound three times a day. I am now a well woman. Three of my neighbors know what it did for me so they are taking it too. I will write to any woman if Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound will help her as it did me. I feel like a young woman now and I thank you."—Mrs. H. C. Henry, 236 Fuller Ave., St. Paul, Minnesota.



Sioux City Ptg. Co., No. 34-1930.

No Ebbled-Hair Singers

The village of Bremnes near Haugesund on the west coast of Norway scored a record when the church authorities recently refused to permit women with cropped hair to sing in the church's choir. "Cropping and undulation are an abomination," says the leader of the church, and though the parish belongs to the state and the bishop has declared that the local council has no right to censure other people's personal tastes in such matters as hair dressing, the unique ruling has not been repealed so far.

Not Machine Made

Machines seem able to produce every essential thing except consumers.—San Francisco Chronicle.

Fifty years after a man has achieved fame he finds every girl he ever knew credited with being his old sweetheart.

Don't Cuss!

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



Are You Traveling?

Use Cuticura Soap and hot water to remove the dust and grime and thoroughly cleanse your face. Anoint with Cuticura Ointment if there is any irritation, roughness or pimples. Cuticura Talcum is refreshing and cooling.

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South Farmers to Seek

Sacramento, Cal.—A cure for agricultural marketing ailments will be sought here at a Pan-American trade conference in August, by representatives of South American and western farm interests. They will gather to determine if Latin-American countries can supply a market for the west's surplus crops, and to see, in the South American market, what is called a "code," composed of six sentences, which obviously being addressed to Deity, are more like a prayer to us. They give an inside view of the

California, with the result that more than 40 delegates from the southern continent will meet those from 10 western states. Exhibits of South American products will be displayed at the state fair and western states exposition, after the conference ends August 30.

A Royal Code.
From Chicago Journal of Commerce. In the executive office of King George of England in Buckingham Palace hangs what is called a "code," composed of six sentences, which obviously being addressed to Deity, are more like a prayer to us. They give an inside view of the

king's chosen rules of behavior, which may be adopted by any man with profit to himself and the comfort of those about him. Usually when a man sets about the task of making rules for his personal conduct, he seeks to cover those things better done or left undone in his daily life; the things he most admires in others and those he dislikes to see in others. It is in this aspect we have, perhaps, a revelation of King George that is a credit to him both as a man and ruler. We quote:

1.—Teach me to be obedient to the rules of the game.

2.—Teach me to distinguish between