

# THE DESERT MOON MYSTERY

BY KAY CLEAVER STRAHAN

She laughed; a cheery, escaping sort of laugh, like something with bright wings suddenly flying loose.

"Come back into the dining-room, then, Mrs. Magin," she called to me. "You can hear better in here."

I came in, a mite shamefacedly. "It was my overweening curiosity," I explained.

Sam murmured, "Satisfiable." "I like people with curiosity," she said. "I understand them, too; because, I suppose, I am one of the most curious persons in the world. Another thing, I have never found a truly curious person who was a wicked person. As much as any generalization can be made, all criminals are egotists. Curiosity means interest in the affairs of others. Of course, one has to be able to discriminate between innate curiosity and the slyness of self protection—But, forgive me, Mr. Stanley, I am chattering away your time. Now then."

(Later we became accustomed to that brisk professional opening of hers, that "Now then," as a signal for getting right down to business, but it was surprising, heard for the first time, as biting your tongue.)

"Did she agree with you, Gabrielle Canneziano was last seen, alive, where and at about what time?"

We told her. "Did she seem at ease, happy, untroubled?"

Sam said, "I was playing chess. I didn't notice."

"I did," I said. "She was unhappy, troubled, and frightened."

"Frightened? Are you positive that you had that impression at the time?"

"Yes. I spoke to Mrs. Ricker about it, right then."

"Did she agree with you, then?"

"She didn't say."

"Did Gabrielle Canneziano speak to any one of you, as she walked through the room?"

I told her about Gaby's gesture to Chad, and about him following her to the porch and talking to her there.

"Chadwick Caulfield? The man who killed himself when the body was found?"

"Yes."

"Did he leave the porch with her?"

"No. He came straight back into the house."

"What other members of the household were in the room at that time?"

Sam told her.

"That leaves her sister, and your son and daughter as the only members of the household who were absent at the time. How long before Martha Stanley returned to the house?"

Sam said, "I was playing chess. But I know it wasn't long."

"It wasn't more than five or six minutes," I said.

"How long before Dannielle Canneziano came downstairs?"

I told her about Danny's calling after Gaby. "It wasn't much more than ten minutes after she called, not fifteen minutes, I am sure, before Danny came downstairs."

"Since you are a cook," she said, "you probably have more than the average ability in estimating time."

"Good cooks," I told her, "don't estimate. They know. When I'm boiling three minute eggs, I use my watch, and always have."

"At least, then," she said, "you know how difficult it is to deal accurately with minutes, with every desire and reason to be honest, five minutes, in the testimony of a witness, may be anything from two minutes to seven-

teen; ten minutes, anything from five minutes to twenty-three; twenty minutes, anything from nine minutes to forty-five; forty-five minutes, anything from twenty-odd to an hour and a half. Now then."

She went on with her questioning. We had finished breakfast at eight thirty o'clock. At eleven thirty, I felt that she knew everything that Sam and I knew about the case, and, probably, a deal more.

She knew about the two girls searching for something. She knew about Gaby's getting the code letter; about her peculiar actions afterwards. She knew about the quarrel with Sam.

She knew about John having gone to Rattail for medicine that Danny said she had not sent for.

She knew about him taking four hours instead of two to make the trip; about the reasons he had given for that; about him going straight upstairs, the back way, and staying there for half an hour. In answer to her questions, it was Sam and not I who told her about John's acting so bothered and troubled when he came down for supper.

She knew all about our actions between five and six o'clock. She knew that Sam was unwilling to swear that Hubert had been in the barn during that entire time. Sam insisted upon telling her about Danny's suspicions concerning himself: that he had left Chad, the ventriloquist, in the barn to hood-wink Hubert, and had gone off somewhere.

She knew about me asking Chad to close the attic; about the locked door; the key in my pocket. She knew that I had found the body, and had stooped to clean away Sam's pipe ashes.

She had seen the note that Chad had left. She had compared it, through her magnifying glass, with other specimens of his handwriting. She had stated, positively, that the note had been written by the same hand that had written the names and jokes under the pictures in his kodak album. She had spent ten minutes, or more, looking at these pictures. Then she had asked Sam to explain, in detail, why he had entirely discounted Chad's note of confession.

Sam said, "The body was cold and stiff when we found it. That is proof, isn't it, that she had been dead more than an hour?"

"If you are certain of that, it is positive proof that she had been dead much longer than one hour."

"I am certain. Well, until seven o'clock that boy had not been out of my sight for one minute, after Gaby walked through the room, alive, for us all to see her, at four o'clock."

"Twice," Miss MacDonald objected, "you have told me that you could not answer a question because, at the time, you were absorbed in your chess game. How, then can you be certain that Chadwick Caulfield was not out of the living-room for a short time, say fifteen minutes, between four and five o'clock?"

"Because he was playing the piano all that time."

"You are certain that you would have noticed it, had he stopped playing?"

"Certain. He was spoiling my game, and driving me half crazy with his noise. I kept hoping that he would stop. Kept forcing myself not to ask him to stop."

"Why shouldn't you ask him, if it was annoying you to that extent, in your own home?"

"Well, it was Chad's home, too. He had as much right, I

reckon, to play his music as I had to play my chess game."

I liked the look Miss MacDonald sidled at me when Sam said that.

"You, too, are sure," she questioned me, "that Chadwick Caulfield was at the piano during that entire hour?"

"I know it."

"What sort of music was he playing?"

"He was improvising. It was happy, cheerful sort of crooning music—if you know what I mean."

"Yes. He did not seem worried, depressed?"

"Not a bit. He seemed happier than usual, I thought."

She went on with her questions. They brought us to Martha's death. She took what seemed like a long time asking us questions about Martha's health. Had she ever complained of dizziness. Shortness of breath? Indigestion? And all sorts of other seemingly unimportant things.

"Where," she finally came back to the powders again, "was this sleeping medicine purchased?"

Sam told her in San Francisco, with a doctor's prescription.

"Have you still some of them left, in the original box?"

"A few, I think."

"Good. Will you get it for me, Mr. Stanley?"

"I'll get it," I said, and my opinion of her as a detective was lowered, then and there. If she had not found out, by this time, that it was useless to send a man to look for anything anywhere, but, most particularly, in a bathroom medicine closet, she still had too much to learn.

I had seen the powder box, left out of place on the table, the morning of the fifth of July, when I had gone into the hall bathroom. I had picked it up, out of habit, and replaced it in the medicine closet. I thought that I could put my hand right on it.

I could not. When I opened the mirror door, the box was not to be seen. I searched and searched. I might have spared myself the trouble. From that day to this, the box, with the remaining powders in it, has never been found.

## CHAPTER XLI

### Questions

I was afraid of that," Miss MacDonald said, when I returned with my information and nothing else to the dining room. "Now then: Would it be possible for you to remember who last took one of these powders, and when, with no ill effect?"

"Danny and Mary each took one the night of the fourth, when Martha died," Sam answered. "I've asked them about it, and both of them say that they did not feel queer at all, afterwards. They were both wide awake in the morning."

"My word!" said Miss MacDonald.

"I think," I offered, "that something was all wrong with Martha's heart before she took the powder. She acted sleepy, stupid, all afternoon."

"From noon on, you mean?"

"No—at least, I didn't notice until later in the afternoon. Mrs. Ricker said that she had a hard time keeping her awake between seven and eight o'clock."

"I see. Mrs. Ricker did not take one of the sleeping powders that night?"

"She didn't need one," Sam explained. "She is naturally calm. She didn't go all to pieces like the other girls did."

"And yet, I have gathered that she was far from calm when her daughter died?"

"She went clear, raving crazy," I said.

"Yes. Now then—"

"Hold on a minute," Sam said. "I think that you think, from the questions you have been asking, that the sleeping powder, like I gave the other girls, would not have caused Martha's death. Now I want to know—"

"I am sorry, Mr. Stanley," she interrupted, "but I have explained that I can not answer questions."

"Suppose I insist on a few

common sense questions being answered, right now?"

"You can't do that. You can hamper me in my progress. You can dismiss me from the case, right now. But you aren't going to do that either, are you?"

"I won't hamper you, if I can help it. I won't dismiss you, as you say, now, either. It wouldn't be right, without giving you a chance, after you came all the way up here, and you know it. That's why you should try to be reasonable."

"I am trying to be reasonable, Mr. Stanley." Her smile at Sam, just then, looked as if she might be trying to be something a mite more charming than reasonable, besides.

"Now then—"

She was off again, leading us with her questions, through Mrs. Ricker's confession and her suspicions of Martha.

"After Martha came into the house with the bracelet," she asked, "was she out of the room again within the hour; or even within the second hour, between five and six?"

"She was not out between four and five," I said. "She might have been any place, for all I know, between five and six. I was in the kitchen."

"Did you have any particular reason for watching her between four and five o'clock?"

"No."

"Then, I am afraid that you can not be positive that she did not leave the room."

"I am positive," I insisted. "There weren't any goings nor comings. We all stayed right in the room. It was too hot to move around. I know that Martha did not leave the room. She sat beside Chad on the piano bench, for a while. She sat on the arm of Sam's chair, watching the chess game—"

"Gosh!" Sam said. "I remember that, now. She was fooling with my hair. I kept smelling the blacking on her shoes."

"You couldn't have," I said. "Because, Sam, she was wearing white shoes."

"She used some preparation to clean her white shoes, I suppose?" Miss MacDonald asked.

"Some stuff called 'White-o-clean.' We all use it."

She asked for the bottle when I brought it, she smelled of it, and asked Sam to. Is that the odor you noticed?" she questioned.

"Nothing like it."

"Now then."

"Hold on," Sam said. "I've got two things to tell you that you are overlooking, and I know that they are both mighty important."

"What are they?"

"The first one is this. Gaby had lived here close to two months. Martha had never harmed her. Does it stand to reason that, on the very day Gaby was afraid she was going to be killed, Martha would do it? There's too much coincidence in that, isn't there?"

"I think so," she answered breaking her rule for once, at least. "Though we can not ever discount coincidence. In the first place, what appears to be coincidence usually proves not to be coincidence at all, in the end. In the second place, genuine coincidences are much more frequent than is generally supposed, or admitted. But, Mr. Stanley, unless the other thing you have to tell me is a fact, and not an opinion, I am going to ask you not to tell it to me, at least not until later."

"It is straight fact."

"Very well, then?"

"I'd rather show you," Sam said. "Then you wouldn't have to take my word for it. Will you come out to the rabbit hutch with me?"

"But," she questioned, "can that be necessary?"

### (TO BE CONTINUED)

**That Makes Him Popular.**  
From San Francisco Chronicle. A great president is one who happens to be on the job when you are having a run of good luck.

**Backward.**  
From Tit-Bits. "Is your wife shy about telling her age?" "Very—about 19 years shy."

allow high water to scour the channel. Major Young has accomplished a great work. He accepts his next assignment with the full assurance that the river is locked. It remains for Lieut. Col. R. C. Moore, temporarily in charge, and for Lieut. Col. E. L. Daley, who will take charge later, to finish the job.

**In the Hole.**  
From The Humorist. Smith—Been making yourself a nuisance to my wife, I suppose? Tramp—I've just done a little job in the garden for 'er, and now she's waitin' for you to explain a lot of empty bottles I dug up.

## Universal Impulse to

### Respond to Fire Alarm

The multiplication of unenforceable laws reached its climax in Brookfield, Mo., where the city council passed an ordinance prohibiting citizens from running to fires, says the St. Paul Dispatch. No impulse is more firmly entrenched in the human makeup than that which drives men, women and children to break into a run at the sound, sight or report of fire. Let you sky display even a slightly unnatural glow, and cracker box perorations end in the middle of a sentence, houses are abandoned, decorum ignored and the entire population resembles a football team in a desperate effort to make the last 10 yards.

There is nothing like a fire to speed up the human ambulatory department. Combustion is as irresistible as the latest jazz tune. Cats and dogs and all that crawls upon the earth are subject to its giddy spell.

## EXCESS ACID SICKENS—GET RID OF IT!

Sour stomach, indigestion, gas, usually mean excess acid. The stomach nerves have been over-stimulated. Food sours in the stomach.

Correct excess acid with an alkali. The best form of alkali is Phillips' Milk of Magnesia. It works instantly. The stomach becomes sweet. Your heartburn, gas, headache, biliousness or indigestion has vanished!

Phillips' Milk of Magnesia is the pleasant way—the efficient way to relieve the effects of over-acidity. Phillips' Milk of Magnesia has been standard with doctors for over 50 years. 25c and 50c bottles at druggists.

A girl's idea of sweetness is about equally divided between love's young dream and mixed chocolates.

Blessed are the unenvious, for they enjoy what they've got.

## How Old Are You?

When Will You Be **42?**

Today You Say—And That Is That—But Tell Me, Are You Very Fat?

Well, if you are—it's probably your own fault—you don't know how to eat right and that's one reason. If you would like to learn how to lose the fat you hate—and no one else likes—do as I did—Take this 30 day test—

Cut out candy, cakes—pies and ice cream—cut down potatoes, rice—butter—cheese, cream and sugar—Eat anything else you feel like eating, but moderately—lean meat—fish—chicken—vegetables and fruit are best—

Take one-half teaspoonful of Kruschen Salts—in a glass of hot water every morning before breakfast—don't miss a morning—follow this advice. One woman lost 19 pounds in 4 weeks—another got rid of 47 pounds in 3 months—a New York woman lost 14 pounds with one bottle of Kruschen and is full of vim and pep, so she writes—

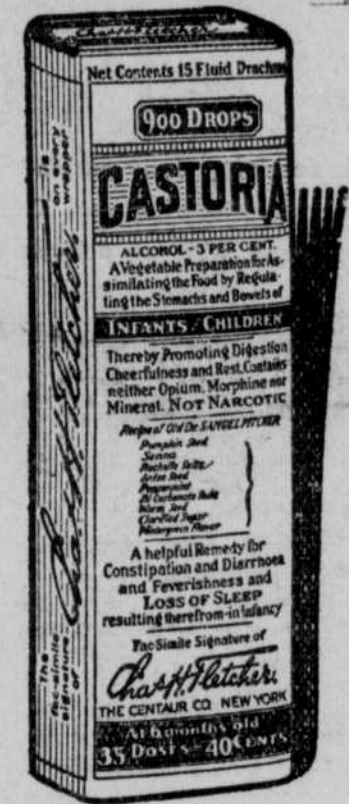
At any drug store in the world you can get these magic salts—one 85 cent bottle lasts 4 weeks—Ask for Kruschen Salts—an enemy to Fat.

**for Coughs**  
Take Boschee's Syrup and coughing stops at once! Relieves where others fail. Contains nothing injurious—but, oh, so effective! GUARANTEED.

**Boschee's Syrup**  
At all druggists

Sioux City Ptg. Co., No. 41-1930.

Many a young man who thinks he is a girl's intended is only her pretender.



## For TEETHING troubles

**FUSSY, fretful . . .** of course babies are uncomfortable at teething time! And mothers are worried because of the little upsets which come so suddenly then. But there's one sure way to comfort a restless, teething child. Castoria—made especially for babies and children! It's perfectly harmless, as the formula on the wrapper tells you. It's mild in taste and action. Yet it rights little upsets with a never-failing effectiveness.

That's the beauty of this special children's remedy! It may be given to tiny infants—as often as there is need. In cases of colic and similar disturbances, it is invaluable. But it has every-day uses all mothers should understand. A coated tongue

**Too Much Talk**  
Divorce Judge—Well, what's the bone of contention in your family?  
Husband—Jawbone, your honor, jawbone!

**Sure Way to Tell**  
Lavinia—Is that man next door married?  
Katrina—No, don't you hear him singing in the bath?

## HEAD HURT?

**WORK** won't wait for a headache to wear off. Don't look for sympathy at such times, but get some Bayer Aspirin. It never fails.

Don't be a chronic sufferer from headaches, or any other pain. See a doctor and get at the cause. Meantime, don't play martyr. There's always quick comfort in Bayer Aspirin. It never does any harm. Isn't it foolish to suffer any needless pain? It may be only a simple headache, or it may be neuralgia or neuritis. Rheumatism. Lumbago. Bayer Aspirin is still the sensible thing to take. There is hardly any ache or pain these tablets can't relieve; they are a great comfort to women who suffer periodically;



they are always to be relied on for breaking up colds.

Buy the box that says Bayer, and has Genuine printed in red. Genuine Bayer Aspirin doesn't depress the heart. All druggists.

**BAYER ASPIRIN**

**A Wild River Tamed.**  
From Kansas City Star. In connection with the departure of Maj. Gordon R. Young, who has been in charge of Missouri river development, it is important to take stock of the situation in river improvement. For undoubtedly there are persons who are skeptical about the possibilities of maintaining a permanent channel. The Missouri is what is called a "wild" river. It is not like the Ohio and the upper Mississippi, which stay within permanent banks. It runs through a region of soft, fertile earth, with banks in many places unable to stand the river's constant soundings. The result is

this wild river thrashes around like a living thing and smashes out new channels for itself. It carries an enormous amount of sediment from the caving banks, which it deposits in the form of sandbars to block navigation. Because it is a wild river it cannot be handled with dams and locks like the Ohio. It would deposit sediment in the pools above the dams and would cut around them unless it were controlled by the present type of work. The task of regulating the Missouri is the biggest river job ever undertaken in this country or Europe. In the years of what amounted to preliminary study before the

present intensive campaign of improvement was put under way as the result of Herbert Hoover's epoch making speech in Kansas City five years ago, the army engineers worked out an effective and brilliant technique for controlling the Missouri. Briefly, they discovered how to make the river do its own work, scour its own channel. The wild Missouri is now three-fourths in a cage—a cage of its own building. In the next two years it will complete its cage and be ready for service. A recent investigation of the river showed the 6-foot channel intact at every strategic point where the work had been completed in time to