

THE DESERT MOON MYSTERY

BY KAY CLEAVER STRAHAN

"Most criminals are stupid, though," she argued, "she clung to her point. Try as they may, they always make some stupid blunder."

"It seems to me," I said, "that the ones who get caught are stupid; they are the ones who have made the blunder, left the clue. But look at the number of criminals who get clean away. Not long ago, I was reading some statistics—"

"You know what Mark Twain said about statistics? There are three kinds of liars: liars, damned liars, and statistics."

I had to laugh. I think she said that to put me in good humor, for she went right on to say, "But you haven't told me, yet, that you will be my assistant in this case."

She couldn't hoodwink me. "I told you that I'd be no use to you, as long as you doubted every word I said."

"But," she argued, "by your own admission you tried to shield Mr. Stanley, immediately after the murder; stop ping to clean away his—the pipe ashes. If you tried, once, to shield him, wouldn't you try again to shield him, if you needed to?"

"No," I said. "I wouldn't. I'll tell you why. That night, and for several days after, my mind was like a dirty cluttered kitchen. I couldn't get enough space cleared in it to start thinking, let alone working it. I have tidied up a place, since then, and I've done a batch of thinking. I know, now, that Sam doesn't need me, nor anyone, to shield him. Any evidence found against him, will be good evidence, in the end, against whoever fixed it to throw blame on him."

"I am inclined to agree with you," she said. "Now then: Is there anyone here who would benefit by his conviction?"

"Am I," I questioned, "your assistant, or am I not?"

"Does it make a difference in your answer?" she questioned in return.

"A deal of difference. Being your assistant honor would bind me, wouldn't it? If I know that you are believing that I'll help, and tell the truth, I'll try to. If I think I am to be doubted, anyway, maybe I'll say what I'd like to say."

She sat and looked straight at me for at least half a minute. "I do believe you," she said, "and trust you. I have, since I first met you at the station. I can't help myself, you're all right, Mrs. Magin, and I know it. I'll agree to your terms. Now then: As my assistant, is there anyone on the place who would benefit in any way by Mr. Stanley's conviction?"

"In a way," I said, though it all but choked me, "John would. He is to inherit everything Sam has. But John loves Sam. And John didn't do it."

"Miss Canneziano would also benefit, then, wouldn't she, since she is to marry young Mr. Stanley?"

"It doesn't make sense," I said. "John has plenty of his own, right now; and Sam would give them anything and everything they wanted besides, as long as he lived."

"I had understood," she said, "that Mr. Stanley objected to the marriage."

"Not a bit of it. He has asked them to wait a year. That's all."

"Is there," she asked, next, "any person at present on the ranch whom you would concede might, possibly, commit a murder?"

"Canneziano."

"Yes, I know. And leaving him out of it?"

"Well," I had to hesitate. "I am not sure. Every instinct I have tells me that neither Hubert Hand nor Mrs. Ricker—No. It is an awful thing to

say; but, do you know, Gabrielle Canneziano herself was the only other person who has ever been on this ranch whom I could even imagine doing such a terrible thing."

"I wonder why you disliked her so much?" she said.

"Because she didn't have any of the decent, ordinary virtues," I answered. "She didn't know anything about them. Not charity, nor gratitude, nor kindness, nor honesty, nor modesty, nor—nor anything."

"Isn't it strange that twin sisters, who looked as much alike as these girls did, should be so entirely different as to character?"

I had not seen her notes at that time. I did not know that she had written "Innocent" after Danny's name. I spoke up, pretty hotly.

"Strange or not, it is true. In character those two girls were as different as night and day. I never even thought that they looked alike. Who told you that they did?"

"I have seen their photographs," she reminded me. "Chadwick Caulfield's album is filled with them."

"Their photographs may look alike. They didn't."

"But they did," she insisted. "I tell you," I said "that they acted so differently, and talked so differently, and dressed so differently, that there was not one bit of likeness."

"A most unusual state of affairs for duplicate twins. These sunshine and tempest relationships are seldom found, outside a Mary J. Holmes' novel. Miss Danielle Canneziano came here on a most doubtful errand; an errand that amounted to robbery, nothing else—"

"If you are accusing Danny—" I interrupted.

"Oh, I am not!" There was a flash of temper in that.

"Making all allowances for mistakes in time, Miss Canneziano could not have committed the murder herself. But, suppose that her past was not as innocent and blameless as she would like to have you all think. Suppose that a revelation of all she knows, or suspects, concerning her sister's death, would also bring to light things that she can not afford to have brought to light concerning herself. It is at least reasonable to think that she knows more than she is willing to tell."

"Maybe," I had to admit. "But I doubt it."

"Why do you so dislike that admission?"

"Because John loves her. John is a good boy. I'd hate to see his heart broken."

"Will you forgive me for saying that young Mr. Stanley does not impress me as a man who is very deeply in love?"

"I know," I agreed. "Just now he is a mite put out with Danny. He has been, ever since she accused Sam."

"Considering the circumstances under which Miss Canneziano made that accusation, young Mr. Stanley is acting most unjustly—if that is the case."

"All men are unjust to the women they love," I told her. "It seems to be a part of it, like a rash with measles."

She smiled at that, and changed the subject.

"I wonder whether you noticed," she said, "that coming up from the station I set a trap for Miss Canneziano. Just for an instant, I fancied that there was more fear than grief in her attitude toward meeting her father. I suggested, you remember, that she see him alone? I wanted to see whether she desired a private interview with him. Her prompt refusal made it evident that she had no secret

to give to him, and expected to get none from him. That is in her favor. Still—

"Before you go now, since you have agreed to help me, do you mind if I direct a bit? I want you to keep one eye on Miss Canneziano. I want you to keep the other eye on Mr. Canneziano, Mr. Hand and Mrs. Ricker. Will you do that?"

"One whole eye for Danny," I questioned, "and only a third of an eye for each of the others?"

"For the present," she smiled. "Will you do that?"

I said that I would. It was not until after dinner the next day, when I was resting in my own room, feeling as virtuous as the three monkeys, who see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil, pleased as Punch over my failures of the past twenty-four hours, that I realized that I just naturally could not carry through a job that went as much against the grain as that job went.

We are, I thought, allowed to know some things—just simple, honest knowing. And I knew that keeping a suspicious eye on the girl who had said "bless your heart" to me, on the evening of the second of July, was as sensible as sitting up for Santa Claus.

Someone knocked on my door. I answered the knock. Miss MacDonald, all smiles, was standing there.

"Let me come in," she said; and, as soon as my door was closed behind her, "A most fortunate thing has happened."

CHAPTER XLVIII

New Clues

"Someone," she went on, "has been in my desk and has stolen the code letter."

I could manage nothing but an echo. "Fortunate!" I said.

"I had a careful copy of it, locked up, of course. I have been leaving the letter in plain sight on my desk for bait. Don't you see, Mary," she forgot her formality in her excitement, "this is the mistake I have been hoping for. I have found a beginning—at last. It is bound to be easy from now on. Oh, Joy!"

She was almost doing dance steps. I wasn't. I was thinking, hard, in the tidy space in my mind; trying not to get cluttered with her excitement, trying to cook up some common sense.

"The letter," she went on, "could not have concerned anyone in this house except Miss Canneziano, her father, and, possibly, not probably, young Mr. Stanley."

"I guess," I said, "that was likely what you were wanted to think."

Her gray eyes questioned me.

"Supposing," I answered, "that Mrs. Ricker, or Hubert Hand, or anyone of us, wanted to get you clear off the track, suspecting especially Danny, could one of us do better than to steal the code letter?"

"My word!" she said. "And you, with a mind that works like that, spending your life doing cooking."

"Doing cooking," I told her, "is how my mind comes to work like that. If anyone ever told you that it didn't take brains to cook, he was making a big mistake."

"But such quick, sure thinking," she said, "is marvelous."

She laughed. "Listen to me doing a Dr. Watson for your Holmes," she said. "Golly, but I'm lucky to have you at hand, though."

I love to be flattered. I sat and preened myself.

"All the same," she went on, "it does prove one thing. That the murderer, or his close accomplice, is right here on the place, now."

"Chad's confession proved that. The key in the fireplace proved it, too."

"Dear me, no. Not conclusively. Now, let me see." She took a folded paper from the front of her dress. "Here is my copy of the letter. It does look a mess, doesn't it?"

I looked at the paper and read, as before:

"Paexzaltp! f-y nyx ogrgrago, rn fgao atf jan j-asn, ahzgo zkg c-. ahhalo,

vkgt nyx ciplzgr rg zkg kypulzae, zkaz nyx. . ."

It surely looked a mess.

"The fact that is written on the typewriter," she said, "makes me suspect that the typewriter may unwrite it for us."

I told her then what I had not thought to tell her before; about my having heard the typewriter going, slowly, in Gaby's room right after she had received the letter.

"Fine!" she said. "She had burned the caps for the keys too—all but the curly 'Q' that rolled away. May I use the same typewriter that she used?"

We went together into Gaby's room.

"I should have thought you'd want to clean this room first of all," I said.

"Mr. Stanley unlocked it for me that first night. I spent five or six very busy hours in here, and I slept here that night, too."

"Upon my soul! Doesn't that go to show? I'd have taken oath in any court that you spent the night in your own room."

"That is exactly it," she said. "Honest people are so sure that they know things which they don't know at all and that they have seen things, which they haven't seen."

I have wished, since, that I had said something else instead of saying, "Well, I might think I knew something which I didn't know; but I'd never make a mistake about what I had seen or had not seen."

"Perhaps not—" she said. "Did you find anything in here that night?" I questioned.

"Nothing. The burned papers were completely burned, as they usually are. Of course, the complete absence of clues should be made into a valuable clue—but I haven't quite worked it out. For instance, though, you insist that she was a vain conceited person?"

"If ever there was one."

"Vain women usually have photographs of themselves about. I found not one in here."

"She used to have one, in a silver frame," I said. I looked around and saw the frame lying face down on the mantel. I picked it up. An old faded picture of Sam and Margarita in their wedding togs confronted me. I had seen it plenty of times before, but in the old album downstairs.

When I had shown it to Miss MacDonald, and had told her about it, she took it and carried it to the window.

"The glass has been washed, carefully," she said, "since the picture was put in here."

She pressed on the purple velvet back and took the picture from the frame. Across the bottom of the picture, where the wide silver frame had hidden it, written in Gaby's bold handwriting, were these words:

"My one deadly enemy."

"My word!" said Miss MacDonald.

"Are you certain," she questioned, next, "that the girl's mother is not living?"

"Don't ask me to be certain of anything," I said, and looked for a chair to sit down in.

She came and put one of her capable hands on my shoulders. "You shouldn't let this trouble you," she said. "It is more than likely that Gabrielle Canneziano had nothing to do with it. I must verify the handwriting."

In the next instant she certainly gave me a fine turn. Her eyes went big and round, her cheeks blazed with blushes, and she clapped her hands to them and stood staring at me as if I were the original human horror. "I—"

she gasped out, "I—have made a mistake."

I felt like rising and giving her a good shaking. "Lands!" I snapped. "Who hasn't?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Real Golf Bug.
The Nurse: It's a boy.
Confirmed Golfer: Hurrah! A caddie!

offices and homes or to changes in centrals.

Soup Won on Advertising.

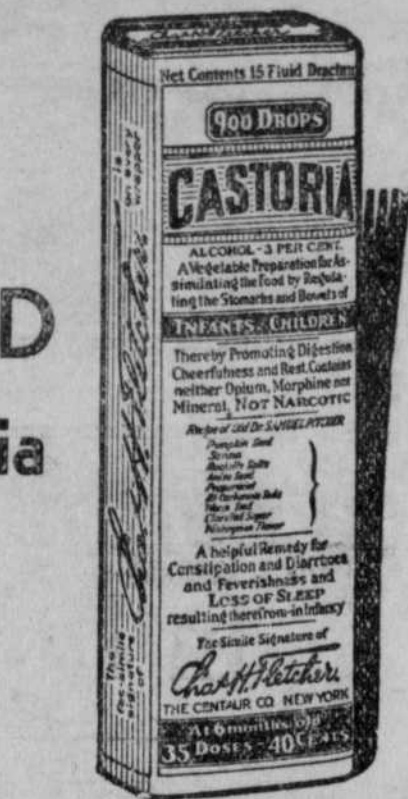
The man who originated canned soup died recently and left an estate valued at \$100,000,000. Now the explanation for the large estate appears. He spent an average of \$2,500,000 a year in advertising.

Elva, Nev. — (UP)—Many range cattle now boast new footwear—steel shoes made necessary by heavy livestock loss from sore and infected feet. Marked decrease in cattle deaths has been the result.

Wakeful restless CHILD needs Castoria

WE can never be sure just what makes an infant restless, but the remedy can always be the same. Good old Castoria! There's comfort in every drop of this pure vegetable preparation, and not the slightest harm in its frequent use. As often as Baby has a fretful spell, is feverish, or cries and can't sleep, let Castoria soothe and quiet him. Sometimes it's a touch of colic. Other times it's constipation. Or diarrhea—a condition that should always be checked promptly. Just keep Castoria handy, and give it promptly. Relief will follow very promptly; if it doesn't you should call a physician.

All through babyhood, Castoria should be a mother's standby; and a wise mother continues it in more liberal doses as a child grows up.



Readily obtained at any drug-store, the genuine easily identified by the Chas. H. Fletcher signature and the name Castoria on the wrapper like this:



Machinery in British Cotton Mill Made Junk

Low Moor, a village near Clitheroe, recently saw disappear its last hope of renewed prosperity, the machinery in the village mill, which formerly employed a total adult population of 700, being sold in small lots to brokers at scrap metal prices.

The mill, established 130 years ago, and run ever since by the Garrett family, was the first in Lancashire to introduce power looms, and cavalry defended it against the mob of 1820. Trade depression resulted in the mill closing nearly three years ago. One hundred and twenty-eight looms, costing \$120 each, sold for \$7; 640 looms, which today would each cost \$90, were knocked down for \$3.25, and 500, which, when running, were worth \$80 apiece, sold for \$2.75. Brokers have seldom known looms to sell so cheaply.—London Times.

THE LAXATIVE WITH HIGHEST ENDORSEMENT

When you get up headachy, sluggish, weak, half-sick, here's how to feel yourself again in a jiffy.

Take a little Phillips' Milk of Magnesia in a glass of water—or lemonade. Taken in lemonade, Phillips' Milk of Magnesia acts like citrate of magnesia. As a mild, safe, pleasant laxative, Phillips' Milk of Magnesia has the highest medical endorsement. As an anti-acid to correct sour stomach, gas, indigestion, biliousness, it has been standard with doctors for 50 years. Quick relief in digestive and eliminative troubles of men, women, children—and babies.

Foreign Ground

Betty Jean was playing in a neighbor's yard when a woman called to her from the street:

"Don't you know you're stepping all over those flowers?"

"Oh, that's all right," replied Betty Jean. "I don't live here."

After a boy runs away from home and comes back of his own accord, he is a better boy.



IT'S easy to throw off a cold when you know what to do—and do it. Two or three tablets of Bayer Aspirin will break up a cold in a jiffy! Take them promptly. Bayer Aspirin will check your cold at any stage, but why wait until you are miserable? These tablets are perfectly harmless because they don't depress the heart. If your throat feels sore, crush three more tablets in a little water

Help Your Kidneys



Deal Promptly With Kidney Irregularities.

When bladder irritations, getting up at night and constant backache keep you miserable, don't take chances! Help your kidneys at the first sign of disorder. Use Doan's Pills. Successful for more than 50 years. Endorsed by hundreds of thousands of grateful users. Sold by dealers everywhere.



Sioux City Pkg. Co., No. 45-1930.

For the Average Girl

E. Barry Wall said at a Deauville dinner:

"There used to be a proverb about girls—'The more they take off, the more they get on.' But girls are now taking off too much. The average girl isn't a Clara Bow, and when she sprawls on a beach in a one-piece bathing suit, barefooted—well, that proverb doesn't seem to hit her off."

"What hits her off is the answer of the zoo keeper."

"A lady said to him: 'That rhinoceros is a male, I suppose?'"

"And the keeper answered: 'No, ma'am; it belongs to the fair sex.'"

To be appropriately dressed for dinner one may need a napkin 3 feet square in his lap.

New York Has "Jerks"

James Truslow Adams in Yale Review.

One gets the impression, for example, that all things in New York, even the buildings themselves, are engaged in some strange fantastic dance as unmeaning as the "jerks" of old camp meeting days.

While I had been abroad, my safe deposit company had gone out of business owing to a merger. My boxes had had to be transferred and held in another institution until my return, so that one of my first duties was to locate them. That done, I had them taken (under armed guard, of course) to another bank 50 feet away. I had just got them stowed there when, happening to mention that I would be in Europe next January, I was told that my new company would be moving them, and a fresh complexity was put up to me to be solved.

A week after I landed, the firm of brokers through whom I make my small investments moved to a new skyscraper. My bank is to move in a few months. Going to where I had last left the consolidated ticket office, I found it had moved five blocks. Going to see an editor, I found that the office had been moved three days before. A moving van company with which I had

other bank 50 feet away. I had just got them stowed there when, happening to mention that I would be in Europe next January, I was told that my new company would be moving them, and a fresh complexity was put up to me to be solved.

A week after I landed, the firm of brokers through whom I make my small investments moved to a new skyscraper. My bank is to move in a few months. Going to where I had last left the consolidated ticket office, I found it had moved five blocks. Going to see an editor, I found that the office had been moved three days before. A moving van company with which I had

other bank 50 feet away. I had just got them stowed there when, happening to mention that I would be in Europe next January, I was told that my new company would be moving them, and a fresh complexity was put up to me to be solved.

A week after I landed, the firm of brokers through whom I make my small investments moved to a new skyscraper. My bank is to move in a few months. Going to where I had last left the consolidated ticket office, I found it had moved five blocks. Going to see an editor, I found that the office had been moved three days before. A moving van company with which I had

