THE DESERT MOON MYSTERY

BY KAY CLEAVER STRAHAN

Sam got out that silly, shrill voice he has for talking when he is trying to mock a woman, any woman, and in using it he spoke up, real loudly. "'Well, Mr. Stanley, why not allow your son to go down and live with the ranch hands, in their houses, for a time, since he is so eager to do so?'"

"Well, what about that?"

"Ahk!" Sam barked. "She is head over heels in love with him, that's a part of what is the matter with her."

I said, "I wish I thought so."

"Why do you wish that, Mary?" It was Danny's voice. Her white face, with the big, sorrowful eyes, peeked around the high back of a chair near the fireplace.

I was too taken aback to answer her.

"How long have you been sitting there, eavesdropping, young lady?" Sam asked.

"I didn't mean to eavesdrop," she answered, quietly. "I am sorry. I was reading, and didn't hear anything until you began to mimic Miss MacDonald. I heard all of that. Why does John wish to go down and live with the outfit?"

"John and Sam had a little trouble to-day," I told her.

Sam, with his usual helpfulness in embarrassing situations, pushed back his chair and went walking fast out of the room.

"Mary," she questioned, "why aren't you my friend any more?"

"Lands, child," I said, "if you mean that because I was wishing Miss MacDonald was in love with John, it was only because I've always reckoned that the more women in love with a man the better for him. John loves you. What do you care how many women love him?"

"John doesn't love me any more. I suppose that was what he and uncle were quarreling about? John wants to get away from me, is that it? And Uncle Sam is so good, and so loyal, that he won't allow it?"

"Nothing like that," I scoffed. "It was—" I left that sentence unfinished, and went into the kitchen.

She followed me. I went straight to the stove and picked up the lid lifter, which, as usual, when I'm not there to watch, someone had left sticking up in a stovelid to get red hot, instead of hanging it on the hook where it belonged. I dropped it with a howl; and, wrapping my hand in my apron, told her to run and get the linseed oil and limewater, up in the hall bathroom, for me.

I am not saying that I was to blame. I do say that, if that fool child Zinnia had not jumped around shouting, "Sody! Sody! Wet sody's the best for burns—"and that, if Mrs. Ricker hadn't heard her screeching, and come in, too, and begun asking questions, I certainly would not have overlooked the fact that, before she went to minister to my needs, Danny had picked up that lid-lifter, from where I had dropped it on the floor, and had hung it on its hook.

She made a quick trip upstairs and down again, with the bandages, and the lotion. She offered, sweet and sympathetic, to do up my hand for me. I had noticed, by that time, that my hand was not smarting much, but I was too excited to account for it reasonably. I asked Mrs. Ricker to attend to the bandages. I had another job for Danny.

"I just came out here," I said, "to make my weekly list to send to Telko for supplies. I can't write with this wadded up hand. Will you make the list for me, Danny? Zinnia, please hand her the pad and pencil from the shelf."

Zinnia brought it. Danny sat down by the table and picked up the jencil. My heart thumped in my throat.

"One crate of Fallon melons," I said.

Danny pushed the pad and pencil acros the table to Mrs. Ricker. "Perhaps you'd as soon make the list for Mary? I have something to attend to upstairs."

"Go on, now you've started it, Danny," I said. "You write such a neat, pretty hand."

"I presume my writing can be read," Mrs. Ricker replied, as she picked up the pencil. "A crate of Fallon melons, did you say?" She wrote it down. I heard Danny running up the back stairway.

I felt flat as rolled dough from my disappointment. In the next minute I had something more than disappointment to bother me.

"I don't see," Zinnia said, how you made out to burn yourself on that stove, Mrs. Magin. Miss Canneziano was out here, just a while ago, wanting to make some tea. The fire was dead out. She boiled the water on the electric plate."

I ran to the stove. It was as cold as winter time.

CHAPTER LX

I suppose it takes more than a minute for one's wits, particularly if they happen to be thick wits, to drain entirely away.

Before mine had completely left me, I had attempted to telephone to Sam, down in the outfit's quarters, and had failed to get a reply to my call. I had told Mrs. Ricker and Zinnia, trying with all my might to hide my fear, to run out and find Sam, or Miss MacDonald, or Hubert Hand, or John—I had forgotten that John was upstairs in his room—and to bring one or all of them to the house as quickly as possible. To this day I don't know why they went, without a question; but they went, running. It was the slam of the screen door behind them, I think, bringing with it as it did the realization of my aloneness and the memory of Miss MacDonald's warning, that turned me clear over to terror.

I shall not describe what I did, nor what I thought, during the time that I was alone there, downstairs, before help arrived. The humorously inclined might think such a description amusing. To me there is nothing amusing in the spectacle of an old woman being gripped and wrung by fright. I longed to run from the house; but I felt that I must stay there to explain the situation to the others when they came, if they ever did come, and to do my poor best, since I had made the fatal mistake, to prevent catastrophe. By clock time, it was only thirty-six silent minutes that I had to wait before Miss MacDonald came, alone and unhurried, up the front steps and into the living-room.

Still holding Sam's thirty-thirty rifle in my hands—I had known that I could never use it to shoot at any living thing, but I had hoped that it might make me look dangerous—I turned to meet her.

"Don't point that thing at me," she commanded. "Put it down. What are you doing with it? What is the trouble here?"

Before I could answer her, Sam, Mrs. Ricker and Zinnia came clattering through the kitchen.

Mrs. Ricker was wringing her hands and saying over and over, in a voice all broken and mutilated with horror, "I have gone insane, I have gone insane. I have gone insane."

Sam said, "Gabrielle Canneziano just now waved at us from her window."

Miss MacDonald turned and ran like a wild thing up the stairs. Just as she disappeared from our sight the sound of a pistol's shot cracked through the place.

I followed the others. I ran up the steps. I stumbled down the hall, behind them, and into Gabrielle Canneziano's room.

I saw Gabrielle Canneziano, her cheeks painted, her lips reddened, long earrings dangling from her ears, lying on the couch. Over her breast was a widening spot of color, staining the fringes of the soft white silk dressing gown that she was wearing. On the floor was a smoking revolver.

John came. He said, "She told me what she was going to do. I allowed her to do it. I did not want Nevada to have to execute a woman."

CHAPTER LXI

Epilogue

Sam says, bitterly, that the only thing I need to explain is the one thing that can ever be explained: how one girl, by changing her clothes and by washing her face, could turn a houseful of supposedly sensible people into a packet of blithering, bat-blind fools for a generous period of time. I can explain that, I think; but I am going to leave it until later, and go clear back to the second of July, the day that Gabrielle received the code letter.

In her tolk with John, John says it was in no sense a confession, that it was nothing but a taunt for us all, a final, regretless, high fling of defiance) there in his room, during the twenty minutes or so that she talked to him, before she shot herself, some things, which might still not be clear to us, were made plain. Also, many of Miss MacDonald's previously formed opinions were directly or indirectly verified. Miss MacDonald had said, you remember, that the murder had been wickedly premeditated.

"When I read that letter," Gabrielle said to John, "and found myself penniless and planless on a Nevada ranch, I at once made up my mind to kill Dannielle, the little fool, and take her place."

How she had persuaded Danny to accept the idea of the masquerade, and to change clothes with her, on the fourth of July, we do not positively know. That is the "hole" that Miss MacDonald mentioned in her puzzle. To my mind, there is little doubt that she gained her way very easily, by using her own unhappiness and disappointment as tools with which to remove Danny's scruples and prod her pity. I am sure, remembering Danny's troubled manner at the time, that she consented unwillingly, that she thoroughly disliked the idea, and that she was afraid of its consequences.

When the two girls went upstairs together, on the afternoon of the fourth of July, they must have gone to effect the transformation. Perhaps, then, for a brief minute or two, the thing did seem amusing to Danny; for I know that I heard the girls laughing together, as I have mentioned, when I was on my errand upstairs.

We do not know, when the disguise had been completed, by what pretext Gabrielle lured Danny into the attic. Their trunks were in the attic. There could be a dozen simple reasons why Danny might consent to go up there with her. Coming downstairs again, Gabrielle caught her by the throat, and strangled her, instantly, by means of the deadly jiu-jitsu hold, which she had learned from her "Strangler" lover. It is a hold that requires little strength—though Gabrielle's trained fingers were strong enough—but much scientific skill.

She took the earrings from Danny's ears—or, perhaps, Danny had not yet put them on—went to her own room, arranged her make-up, got into the wrap, which completely covered Danny's clothes that she was wearing, pulled the hat down over her eyes to conceal the change in hairdressing, and walked through the living-room, for us all to see her, at four o'clock.

When Chad went to the porch with her (this John found out by insistent questioning) she told him that Danny had left the house, earlier, by the back way. That she and Danny had arranged a joke on the rest of us, to enliven the dull afternoon, and asked him to help with it by calling, in Danny's voice to her, when he came back into the house. Chad did it. That was why, since he was standing down by the front doors, the voice supposed to come from the upper hall had a strained and an unnatural sound. Gabrielle had reckoned that Chad, in spite of her request, would be too stupid to discover the facts. Probably she thought that, at any rate, she would be able to impose silence upon him. It was one of her many mistakes. We think that he must have known for the remainder of the afternoon that Gabrielle was masquerading as Danny. His happy mood was caused by the fact that Gabrielle had given him a confidence and had allowed him to perform a small service for her. When he saw what had happened, and when he realized that the girl whom he had worshiped was a murderer, he killed himself. Strange, that in spite of everything, he still loved her enough to leave the confessional note to shield her. The men think that he left the note to shield the rest of us, rather than to shield her, I do not believe it.

She had planned to go straight around the house and re-enter it through the back door. Martha's being by the rabbit hutch was something she had not counted on. It was necessary to distract Martha's attention, and to get her to come at once into the house. She gave her the monkey bracelet. As she did so, probably because of the act of kindness, Martha made one of her frequent mistakes and called Gabrielle "Danny." Gabrielle told John (concerning Martha, John also questioned her insistently) that she then showed Martha the poison in the charm, and told her that it was a love potion that would make Chad love her, "like a lady," if she would swallow it, and never tell anyone anything about it. That, of course, was Martha's secret concerning the happy surprise that had to do with herself and Chad.

Martha out of the way, Gaby must have run quickly around to the back of the house and up the back stairway. To toss the hat and wrap back on the body, replace the earrings, scatter the pipe ashes over the beaded bag (I declare to goodness, I can more easily think of her lying there in her white dressing-gown, than I can think of her, brushing those pipe ashes up, from somewhere, in order to save them for that purpose), and drop the tatting shuttle there, required not more than one or two minutes of time. Another two or three minutes to wash her face thoroughly and to douse on some of Danny's perfume, and she was coming downstairs again, with the headache that necessitated the drawing of the curtains—to make her safety a bit safer, just at first.

She told John that those few minutes when she had to walk through the room, make the trip around the house, and get upstairs again, were the only moments of fright that she had had, from the first to the last. Once safely established in the role of Danny, she said, she knew that she had nothing to fear.

I think, however, that there were other times when she was afraid. I am certain that real fear was there in her room, that day, when the engagement ring dropped from her finger. Though I believe that her fear, then, was that the slight difference between her hands and Danny's hands might be noticed.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

OF INTEREST TO FARMERS

SLOP VS. DRY FEEDING

Slop-feeding of hogs has been a common method for a great many years and is still followed to a large extent in spite of changed conditions. Greatly increased cost of labor and the shorter lifetime of the hog from birth to market are the factors which make the method of feeding a different problem than it was a generation ago. The appetite of the hog often is greater than the capacity of his digestive system if a bulky ration is fed. Water above the amount actually needed cuts down the consumption of dry feeds but in slop-feeding if the pig does not get an excess of water, there should be no handicap in this method of feeding. Earlier work at a western experiment station on the question of methods of watering growing pigs showed that during the summer each pig drank 9 to 10 pounds of water daily. The question which logically followed was whether or not there is any difference if water is given by itself or mixed with the feed. Many experiments have demonstrated the advantage of self-feeding over hand-feeding of dry feeds, but there is little information comparing slop-feeding with the other methods. There is considerably more labor involved in giving water in slop than in keeping it before the jigs either in troughs or in some form of self-watering device. If slop-feeding hogs is to be an economical plan, it must have enough advantage over dry-feeding to more than make up the cost of the additional labor. An experiment to compare dry-feding when the ration was given by hand and also in a self-feeder, with slop-feeding both twice and three times daily, was carried out last year. Four lots of 10 pigs each were fed on rape pasture, each lot having water in an automatic watering device. The summer was very dry and the pasture was of little value during the last half of the 100-day feeding period. A complex mineral mixture was self-fed to each lot. Shelled corn, standard middlings, tankage and buttermilk were the feeds given to each group. Lot 1 was hand-fed twice daily as much as the pigs would eat, receiving the corn dry and the other feeds mixed as slop. Lot 2 was given the same quantity twice daily of each dry feed as the first group ate, the buttermilk being fed separately. Lot 3 was fed dry shelled corn with the other feeds as slop, but had the opportunity of eating as much of the feeds as they wanted three times a day. Lot 4 was self-fed shelled corn, middlings and tankage separately with a limited amount of buttermilk fed in a trough. Each one of the four lots was given less than a full feed of buttermilk, the amounts being approximately the same for all groups. Lot 1 made an average daily gain per pig of 1.53 pounds, at a cost of $6.15 for 100 pounds of grain. Lot 2 made an average daily gain per pig of 1.33 pounds at a cost of $7.10 for 100 pounds of gain. Lot 3 made an average daily gain per pig of 1.51 pounds at a cost of $6.27 for 100 pounds of gain. Lot 4 made an average daily gain per pig of 1.52 pounds at a cost of $5.67 per 100 pounds gain. n the rate of daily gains, the first, third and fourth lots were very uniform, but there was quite a difference between these groups and lot 2, hand-fed twice daily with the feeds except buttermilk in dry form. Lot 2 also made the poorest showing in the amount of feeds for 100 pounds gain, justifying the statement that this method was the least satisfactory of the four plans tried. The self-fed lot was a little the most economical in the use of feeds to make gains in weight. Slop-feeding twice daily seemed to be just as satisfactory as three times daily, and with both these methods there were high daily gains and low feed totals for 100 pounds gain. On the basis of the results in 1929, slop-feeding showed an advantage over the hand-feeding of dry feeds. To obtain a check upon the first year's results, the same experiment was repeated in 1930 when pigs of the same weight as those fed in 1929 were available 12 days earlier. So far as possible conditions were made the same as in 1929, but the season was drier than the previous year and the rape pasture was of less value. The same rations were fed by the same methods as in 1929. Lot 5, fed the same as lot 1 in the first test, made a daily average gain per pig of 1.51 pounds at a cost of $6.15 for 100 pounds of gain. Lot 6, fed the same as lot 2 in the original test, made a daily average gain per pig of 1.46 pounds at a cost of $6.39 for 100 pounds of gain. Lot 7, fed the same as lot 3 in the first test, made a daily average gain per pig of 1.54 pounds at a cost of $6.16 per 100 pounds. Lot 8, fed the same as lot 4 in the first test, made a daily average gain per pig of 1.54 pounds at a cost of $6.32 per 100 pounds gain. The labor cost is an important item when different methods of feeding are compared. The time spent in feeding the 10 pigs in each of lots 5, 6 and 8 was practically the same. The feeder in lot 8 was filled every other day, but time was used twice daily to see that the feeds were not being wasted and to keep the feeder from becoming clogged. Buttermilk was also fed in a trough. The extra time needed to feed lot 7 is accounted for by the noon feed. In 90 days this amounted to 6¾ hours, which is charged at 40 cents per hour. There was a higher labor cost of $2.70 for the feeding of these 10 pigs than for any other lot. The results in daily gain and in total feed for 100 pounds gain in lot 7 do not justify the higher cost of feeding. Combining the results of the two tests, it is found that lots 1 and 5 made an average daily gain per pig of 1.52 pounds at a cost of $6.04 per 100 pounds gain. Lots 2 and 6 made an average daily gain per pig of 1.39 pounds at a cost of $6.63 per 100 pounds gain. Lots 3 and 7 made an average daily gain per pig of 1.52 pounds at a feed cost of $6.11 for 100 pounds gain. Lots 4 and 8 made an average daily gain per pig of 1.53 pounds at a cost of $5.93 for 100 pounds gain.

KILLING TREES

The only sure way to prevent growth and suckering that occurs after a tree is felled is to kill the trunk and root system before cutting the tree. Undesirable trees, vines and shrubs may be treated with sodium arsenite so that there will be no future trouble from sprouts and suckers. This poison can be home mived, but it should be handled with care, for a small quantity taken internally is deadly to persons and animals. Mix into three and one-half pints of water one pound of sodium arsenite (white arsenic) and one-half pound of potassium nitrate, commonly known as saltpeter. This makes about one-half gallon of the killing solution, which may be kept indefinitely in a glass jar or jug. The chemicals can be bought in powdered form at a pharmacy for from 50 cents to $1. In the treatment of trees, slanting ax cuts re made through the bark and well into the sapwood near the ground level. The poison is poured into these cuts with an oil can, until it begins to flow out to the edges of the cut. It is not necessary to completely girdle the tree with ax cuts. Two cuts on opposite sides of the stem are sufficient for the vines and trees up to three inches in diameter. On larger trees all the cuts should be at the same level and sufficiently close that there will be not more than two inches of uncut bark between cuts. After treating, the best practice is to allow the tree to stand until both the top and root system are dead. If it is necessary to fell a tree at once, the stump may be poisoned by the use of the ax cuts near the ground level. With species that sucker vigorously from the roots, the stump treatment may not be effective. It is best to keep farm animals out of areas where poisoning has been done until there have been two or three heavy rains. Cattle have been known to eat dirt on which sodium arsenite has been spilled.

EARLY VACCINATION PAYS

The poultry disease known as chicken pox caused a great deal of loss in young poultry flocks all over the United States during the past season. Many poultrymen waited until their flocks broke out in an epidemic of the disease before using the new vaccine or socalled follicle method of vaccinating their young stock. The results were that many flocks lost from four to six week's egg production at the time when eggs were scarce and high priced. This year such loss can be avoided by vaccinating the flocks earlier. In fact, many of our best poultry pathologists, are advising poultrymen to vaccinate their pullets and cockerels when they are three months of age, thus rendering the birds immune to chicken pox and preventing the great loss in egg production due to this disease. The follicle method of vaccinating is best applied by pulling three of four feathers on the leg of the bird and applying the vaccine to these three or four follicles. It is not wise to apply the vaccine to more than this number, as the shock is too great for the bird. It is advisable, in order to avoid handling the birds twice, to worm the birds at the same time they are vaccinated, as the worm medicine acts at once and the pox vaccine does not become active for 10 or 12 days. Any of the good worm medicines may be used. In the Southwest, at least, it is advisable to use a worm medicine that will remove both the round and the tape worms. One experiment station advises the feeding of a tonic during the two weeks after the birds are wormed and vaccinated. Its authorities give this formula as an effective tonic: Powdered gentian, 4 parts; powdered iron sulphate, 2 parts; powdered nux vomica, 1 part; powdered ginger, 1 part; saltpeter, 1 part. Many egg-laying contest managers declare they are very anxious that breeders vaccinate their birds before sending them to the contests in the fall, as it will save much trouble and time.

IMPORTANCE OF WATER

Feed is unquestionably necessary to produce eggs, but water is equally important—possibly more so. At a western experiment station experiments were run last year and are being repeated this year with the use of all-night lights in pens of layers. Pens that were lighted all night gave better results than did pens that had lights only in the early morning. From the increased proportion of water consumed in the pens that were lighted all night, the station is led to believe that drinking water is a more important item than we have supposed it to be. Some authority has stated that 100 hens will drink between five and six gallons of water a day. If drinking pans are allowed to become empty, it can be seen that the birds will not have sufficient water to carry egg production, and the eggs will drop off. Eggs are approximately 65 per cent water. In all-night lighting 15-watt bulbs are used, dimmer lights than are ordinarily employed.

LEST YOU FORGET

If you have an undersized cow, sell her to the butcher. Never keep such an animal to build up your herd. By using her you will be building the wrong way.

make money is to determine the feed and production records of his cows, eliminate all cows below the profit level, feed the rest according to known production, practice intelligent breeding, and sell a clean product on a fair market. It will then be possible for him to make an income over cost of feed of $100 a year per cow. If he desires to increase his income by $100 all he has to do is to keep another cow.

CURRANT SOIL

Light soil is not suitable for currants. On such soil they are apt to drop their leaves early, which causes a poor crop the next season.

CALIFORNIA FARMER PACKS MANY CROPS INTO SINGLE ACRE

Los Angeles—(AP)—A one-acre farmer in this county sells fish, chickens, eggs, rabbits, grapes, squabs and vegetables to make agriculture pay. And Charles Weeks also breeds canaries on his small but productive area.

The canary cage, in one corner, is covered with grapevines and floored with bluegrass. The grass clippings are used for poultry feed. A cement tank houses fish behind the poultry houses, and a fly trap catches food for the cultivated "blue-gills."

A truck garden about 20x40 feet is cultivated in another part of the acre, while boundaries of the "pee-wee" farm are lined with fruit trees, furnishing a plentiful family supply. Twelve pens with 200 pullets a pen constitute the principal cash income. Grass for rabbits, squabs, chickens and one goat is supplied by clover, Bermuda grass and vegetables not sent to market.

Wild Turkeys Increase Under Government Care

Washington—(AP)—Bronze and green wild turkeys, the kind which adorned Thanksgiving platters of the Pilgrim fathers, have come under Uncle Sam's protection. The turkeys have been given homes in several of the national forests.

Thus cared for, the big gobblers are increasing in the national forests of New Mexico and Arizona. In the Wichita national forest in Oklahoma wild turkeys have a range of 55,000 acres shared chiefly with deer.

Wild turkeys are found in small numbers in wooded mountain districts of Virginia and North Carolina. Alabama and Texas have the most numerous flocks.

UNCLE SAM LIKES PICKLES

Washington—(AP)—There is an average annual production of 3,000,000,000 pickles in the United States. The crop is produced on about 74,000 acres, yields 4,000,000 bushels of cucumbers and returns more than $4,000,000 to the growers.

HERD IMPROVEMENT HELP

Evidently the dairy-herd improvement association is helping in at least two ways to make money for the farmer who milks cows for a living. It helps to prevent a surplus, and eliminates the cows that do not make money for their owners. Therefore, if we come back to the original question: "Are dairymen making money?" we may say that the dairyman who has a well-managed, high-producing herd is making money. The others are struggling. There is no reason why any intelligent man should belong to the struggling class of dairymen. All that a dairyman needs to do to