

THE DESERT MOON MYSTERY

BY KAY CLEAVER STRAHAN

It was a bracelet charm of Baby's a gold monkey, about the size of a large almond, with wide eyes. The minute Martha had seen it she had begun to beg for it. There weren't any monkeys in the jewelry catalogs, but Sam sent off and got her a bear and a turtle. She wouldn't have any truck with them. She wanted that one, particular monkey. Gaby would not give it to her; would not so much as allow her to wear it for a few hours at a time. As usual, this evening she refused to let Martha touch it.

"Yes, and you'll be sorry," Martha threatened.

She went upstairs and emptied a can of pepper in Baby's handkerchief box.

She was always playing tricks of the sort on Gaby, if we did not watch her. For my own part, I wouldn't have bothered with watching her but for the fact that, more than often, she got the two girls mixed up, and it was Danny whose pretty dress would be tied to the chair to tear, instead of Gaby's; or Danny's hair would receive the contents of Chad's paste-pot; and then Martha, discovering her mistake, would make herself ill with crying and remorse. Just as she had hated Gaby from the start, she had loved Danny; but she could not tell them apart.

It seemed incredible even

Martha could be confused about the two girls; because, if ever girls were opposite, those girls were. Of course, they were the same size, about five feet and two inches tall, I should judge, and the same weight—both of them too skinny to my way of thinking, flat as bread-boards.

Their faces, just their faces, did look alike. They both had long brown eyes, straight noses, small mouths—Gaby painted her lips until they looked much fuller and more curved than Danny's—pointed chins, and complexions the color of real light caramel frosting. Danny's cheeks showed a faint pink, coming and going. Gaby painted her cheek-bones, clear back to her ears, with a deep orange-pink color. They both had wavy, dark brown hair, cut just the same in the back, real close fitting and down to a point. But Gaby brushed her hair straight back from her forehead, and put varnish stuff on it till it was as sleek and shining as patent leather. She left all of her ears showing, and she always wore big earrings, dangling from them. Danny parted her hair on the side, and allowed it to wave, loose and soft and pretty. She never wore earrings. Gaby's clothes were all loud colored, or seemed to be—black turned gaudy when she put it on—and they were all insecure appearing, too defiant of paper patterns to be quite moral. Danny's clothes were as neat and quite as a pigeon's.

No wonder that these frequent mistakes of Martha's made me decide that she was losing her eyesight. I spoke to Sam about it, suggesting that Mrs. Ricker would better take her to San Francisco to visit an oculist.

According to his usual custom, Sam laughed at me. He said that he had about concluded that Martha was the only one on the place who could use her eyes to see deeper than gee-gaws and fol-de-rols.

"If you are insinuating," I said, "that those two girls are alike in any respect, inside or outside, you've lost your senses."

"Why shouldn't they be alike?" Sam questioned. "They are twin sisters. They were brought up together; they have had the same friends, the

same teaching, the same environments. Of course they are alike. One of them is playacting. I don't know which one. I suspect Danielle, on account of John."

I may as well state, right here, that all of this remark of Sam's, with the exception of the girls being twin sisters, was a mistake from beginning to end. I didn't, at that time, know much of anything about their past lives. I did know their present characters. I told him so.

He laughed again, and wanted to know what had become of all my theories concerning our modern young girls. Even since the war, I had been standing up for them, through thick and thin.

"It takes a pretty stout theory," Sam answered, "to hear a young lady called a 'damn good sport,' and see her receive it as a compliment."

"Who said that to who?" Sam wanted to know.

"Who do you suppose Hubert Hand to Gaby, of course."

"Hubert Hand," Sam said, "had better behave himself."

Since Hubert Hand was too

selfish ever to love anything that his Roman nose wasn't attached to, his carryings on with Gaby should be classed, I think, not in the center ring, but as the main attraction of the third ring. And he almost old enough to be her father, with white coming into his hair at his temples!

To this day I have never understood those two, during those months. Gaby was in love with John. Hubert Hand was in love with Hubert Hand. Yet they hugged and kissed, and seemed to think that calling it "necking" made it respectable. It wasn't a flirtation, with them. It was more like a fight, where each of them was fighting for something they did not want. A perfectly footless, none too wholesome performance.

"You make him behave himself, Sam," I urged.

"He is free, white and twenty-one. And she sure can take care of herself, if ever a girl could. It's none of my putting."

"What about the rest of us?" I said, "forced to watch such goings on?"

"Don't watch. If you watch Belle, and Sadie and Goldie, that is watching enough for one woman."

Belle, Sadie and Goldie were

the Indian women I had, at that

time, to help me around the

place. I suppose they were

pretty good girls. They did all

the actual work there was to

do around the house, except

the cooking, with me directing

them every step they took. But

when I remember how they all

deserted me, in the time of our

terrible trouble, it makes me

so fighting mad that I don't

like to give them credit for

anything, nor think about them at all, even yet.

CHAPTER VIII

Atmosphere

The girls had been on the Desert Moon a little better than six weeks when, one evening Sam came out into my kitchen where I was setting bread. Belle, Sadie and Goldie had gone home, and I had tidied up after them, as usual, and everything in the kitchen was sweet, and clean, and shining. I had the doors tight shut, so I couldn't hear the radio screeching away in the livingroom, and the windows open, and the evening breeze fresh from the deserts came in, blowing back my ruffled white curtains and purifying the air.

"Mary," Sam began, real solemn for him, "the ancients used to have cities that they called cities of refuge. No

latteries in the states where reform in criminal procedure is particularly necessary. Defects in criminal procedure are not uniform and the institute believes that most states will follow this course in remedying specific defects in their procedure.

The proposed code marks the first completed step in the institute's program to correct the present uncertainty, complexity and delay in the American law. Following a plan established in 1925 the work has proceeded steadily since that date under the supervision of two experts and has received generous cooperation from individual lawyers,

legislators and bar associations in all parts of the country.

The code is based upon practical experience in criminal procedure and actual cases and decisions observed in the past. Consideration is given of the different dispositions of local and state courts, and each statute in the code is supplemented by information as to what the various local courts have decided thereupon in the past. The code will thus be applicable throughout all parts of the country and should do much to aid and clarify the administration of justice.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Looked That Way

From Die Muskete, Vienna.

A woman and a man came round the corner in a car. He put out his hand to turn to the left; she to turn to the right.

Traffic Policeman: What do you want—a divorce?

Judges and bar associations in all parts of the country.

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