THE DESERT MOON **MYSTERY**

BY KAY CLEAVER STRAHAN

CHAPTER LVI A Whisper

I stayed in my room for half an hour, thinking with all my might that I was thinking. At the end of that time, discovering that I had not turned out one single rational thought, I gave it up and went to find John.

I forgot all about the men who were guarding the ranch. I went straight down to the putfit's quarters. I hadn't been on the back of a horse for more than ten years. I got a lazy puncher to stop doing nothing long enough to saddle an old nag for me, and boost me up on her, and off I went.

Jogging along through the Blean, clear air, I at last began really to do some thinking. I came to my senses in consequence. It was high time. I turned the nag around and rode back to the outfit's quarbers. I slid off of her, and left her there, and went walking

to the house. It was fortunate that I had given up my wild goose chase. There on the porch sat John, talking to Miss MacDonald. When I got close enough to then to see how he looked, I Telt as if my heart would break for him. He looked, in spite of his tan, like death.

When I had reached the Root of the steps, both of them, without saying an aye, res, nor no to me, got up and

went into the house. My legs were shaking under me. I had to go slowly up the steps. Neither John nor Miss MacDonald was in the livingroom when I got there. I went on into the kitchen.

Miss MacDonald was putting on her big apron. Zinnia was clattering the silver in the dining-room.

"John knows, doesn't he?" I questioned. "Knows?"

I think that I know what

"Don't!" she shot out at me, and I wouldn't have jumped any higher if she had shot a gun instead of a word. "Don't," she calmed down

and came over to me and spoke in a whisper, "say anything in here. Not anything." "I've got to," I said. "I'm

human. You listen to me." I whispered it, right into her

I hadn't half finished what I had to say before she moved away from me; but she nodded her head, with those quick, short little nods that always mean confidential agreement.

For almost an hour I had been thinking that I knew it. That nodding of hers made me realize that I had only feared it; that I had believed that she could deny and disprove

I had planned biscuits for dinner. I went and got out the bread-board, and opened the flour bin, but I couldn't do it.

"I'm sorry," I said, and to my disgust I began to cry. "I guess you'll have to make out to do alone, for a while-" I-I'm not feeling well, I'll have to go and lie down-

Still blubbering and blind with tears I went upstairs, and bumped into Sam, standing outside John's door. I dried my eyes and saw that he was holding his six-gun, ready for shooting, in his hand.

CHAPTER LVII Grief

What is the matter with you?" I demanded. "What are you doing with that gun?" "John is in there packing his valise. He says he is going to leave the place. I say he is

"Going to say it with the six-gun, if possible, ugh?" I

"If necessary, Mary, by God, he put it up to me, straight. He came to me, and said that

bother to make up an excuse. Said it was all the same to him where he went: 'Frisco, Reno, Salt Lake, anywhere, just so that he could get away. When I reckoned he'd stay right here, he up with the idea of going down to live with the outfit. He's a fool; so he thinks that I am. Thinks I don't know he could get a good horse, the first night-" "If John thinks you're a fool," I said, "he's paying you too much respect. I can't think of anything much worse, or more dangerous than a fool,

he had to get off the place for

a while. Had to. I baited him

along. Asked him where he

wanted to go. He didn't even

try to hide his feelings. Didn't

you. Give me that gun." I reached out and took it. His fingers didn't stick to it very long. I judged that he was not quite as eager to shoot John on sight as he had been

but whatever it is, you are it.

It turns me all over to look at

pretending to be. "Now get yourself away from here.." I said. "Get on downstairs, if you know the way, and eat your dinner. I'll look after John."

"If you help that boy to escape-'

"Escape your foot!" I slipped into John's room,, shut the door in Sam's face, and pushed the new bolt into its slot.

John's things were all strewn about; his valice was standing open on a chair, but he had stopped trying to pack it. He was lying down on the

I went and sat on the bed beside him and put an arm around his shoulders.

"Mary?" he questioned. "Yes. There, there now, John dear. Try to brace up-" "You don't know!"

"Yes, I do know, dear. I know just what you know."

"My God," he groaned. "It is certain, then? I still had a little hope. I-I can't keep on with life, not after this. When I think of these last weeks-I I'm filthy, I tell you."

"John, dear," I tried to comfort. "You didn't know-you couldn't. You aren't to blame. You are young-"

I knew that I had no comfort for agony such as his, but I could not bear to leave him; so I stayed, hoping, as I suppose foolish women have always hoped, that just plain, quite loving him might help a

After a minute or two, he said, "Mary-if you don't mind, I-I've got to fight this out alone."

I went to my own room. I put a cold water compress on my eyes, and pulled down the window shades and lay on my bed. I was mortal tired from sorrow, and the hurt in my heart for John was sharp as a neuralgia pain, but my mind went-working right along, independent of my feelings; straight on, like a phonograph, if somebody had started it, might keep right on grinding out a tune while the ship that

it was on was sinking. When Miss MacDonald came up, bringing me some dinner, which I couldn't touch, I said to her: "It seems true, but I know that it can't be. It is too impossible. I mean-too far fetched."

"Not a bit of it," she said. "The only impossible thing about it is the length of time it has taken us to discover it. Of course—figive me, Mrs. Magin, I was almost on the trail once, I had at least started in the right direction, and then you threw me completely off."

"I! How?" She smiled at me. "By seeing something which you did not see. But you are not in the least to blame for that. The fault is all mine."

She went and snut my transom. She looked through my clothes-closet. She looked under my bed, saying, as she did so, "The proverbial practice of old maids, you know." She came and sat close beside me, "Now then. . ." she said.

> CHAPTER LVIII The Puzzle

Listen. Bit by bit it works into the whole, like a picture puzzle—each segment slipping right into place. There is just one hole in it all, and I think your Danny's kindness and uuselfishness will supply that necessary bit."

She began then—to use her own way of saying it-to put together the pieces of the puzzle. She was right. Bit by bit it fitted together. Almost at once she came to the place that she had called a hole.

"There is no hole there," I told her. "Under those circumstances, Danny would have been just sweet, and unselfish, and foolish enough to have done that very thing. She did it. That was why she was worried and unhappy, all that day."

"I'm sure of it. Now then ... " She went on: Danny's calling after Gaby that dayeasy to understand now, of course, and leading straight to Chad's suicide and confessional note. Gaby's fear; Martha's murder; Sam's ashes on the bag; Gaby's note to Danny; each one fitting right into place, until spread in front of me was one of the most hideous pictures that any human being has ever been forced to look at.

"Only," I gasped, "there can't be such wickedness in the world! I mean-not such long wickedness."

"In all my experience," she said, "I have never investigated another murder case where the thing was so cruelly, vilely premeditated; wickedly, cunningly carried out. If this is true, it will be, also, the first time that I have found a really brilliant mind belonging to a fiend."

"If it is true!" I echoed. "But it is proven. You have just proven it all to me."

She shook her head. "We have a seemingly perfect fabric made up, wholly, of circumstantial evidence. As yet, we have nothing else. Now I have a question to ask you. It will seem to you that I should have asked you this at least a week ago. I did not, because I was certain that, unless I shared all of my suspicions with you, your answer would be exactly the answer that you gave me before. Now, thinking as you think, I want a very careful answer to this question."

When she had asked it, I refused my first impulse to answer it, at once, and sat thinking carefully for several minutes. The answer that I was forced to give, then, made me sick with shame.

"No," I said, "I didn't. I thought, honestly, that I did. But now I know that I didn't. That-that," I knew I was chattering it, "puts Canneziano's murder right at my door-"

"Nonsense," she folded one of my trembling hands into her steady, capable hands. "We can't go poking about like that, into the machinery of fate, and stay sane. The blame in this case is entirely for me. But, if I had not allowed myself to be misled then, but had worked straight on, something equally tragic might have happened. We don't know. What we do know is, that no more time must be wasted.

"I have spent this past week in trying to obtain the necessary proof. I have failed. Now, I am going to ask you to help me. Will you?"

"I will, and gladly. But you'll have to tell me what you want me to do. I haven't the faintest idea."

She told me. "Lands alive!" I said. "That ought to be easy." I could see that she was annoyed. "'I haven't found it so," she said. "I have made three attempts, as many as I dared make, this week, and have failed. Do you simply, and naturally? You! must realize that-"

"See here," I interrupted, "why not do as Sam wants you to do? Why not arrest the criminal now, and force the proof, afterwards? This sort of evidence could be gotten then, as well as now, and a lot safer, too, it seems to me."

"Mrs. Magin," she said, "until we have evidence of guilt we have no criminal to arrest Incredible as it seems, we might still be wrong concerning every bit of this. I once made a horrible mistake. It was on my third case-that is, after I began to work for myself. I don't talk about it I can't think about it. But 1 made myself a promise then a promise that I have never broken, and which I never will break. Except in extreme necessity, proof, positive, and perfect, must come before any accusation or arrest in a case of mine. Twice, as I have said I have had men arrested because of circumstantial evidence. Each time the evidence was far stronger than anything we have in this case. The first time, the man would have undoubtedly escaped if he had not been put in confinement. The second time was on my third case, which I have mentioned. If you force me to make this the third time-'

"I can't force you to do anything," I reminded her, hoping to cool her down a bit.

"Yes, you can. If you go at this so clumsily that you give the thing away, and so endanger your own life, I shall have to force matters. I must, of course, risk a reputation-I'm not speaking of my own, you understand-in preference to risking a life—again I am not speaking of my own. But, if we are wrong in this, and remember we may be- circumstantial evidence is the trickiest thing in the worldit would be bitterly cruel and wrong. It would be even worse than the other mistake of mine. Will you remember that, when you make your first at-

"Yes, I'll remember. When do you want me to make the first attempt?"

"As soon as possible. This afternoon, if you can do it." "But-how shall I do it?"

"I am going to leave that to you, and to your natural wit. You can do it much more spontaneously if you are not attempting to follow set directions. But do, do be careful.

Don't make a mistake." With that she left me. I am ashamed to say that excitement had made me forget my sorrow. I sat there saying my prayers, planning, and shaking in my shoes, for a good half hour before I could get enough courage to go downstairs. In all probabilities, the next hour would bring me face to face with the murderous fiend; and not by the blink of an eye, not the gnost of a shiver, must I betray my horribie knowledge.

CHAPTER LIX The Fatal Mistake When I finally did get myself downstairs, I found Sam, seemingly alone in the livingroom, playing solitaire. I judged, from the look he gave me, and from the way he had his shoulders hunched, that he was still in a right ugly humor.

"Where's everybody?" I "Out committing murders, somewhere, likely.' "That's a nice way to talk,

isn't it?" He mumbled something. "What?" I said. "I can't hear you when you mutter like

that.' "I didn't talk much louder when I told Miss MacDonald about John's trying to make a getaway. She heard me all right. That's all the good it

did. Do you know how much I trust that woman?" "No, I don't know. I don't care, either."

(TO B) CONTINUED)

This Will Be Good News to the Damage Suit Lawyers, Too!

In New Jersey a locomotive was derailed by an automobile. Which will serve to encourage that kind of drivers. Wetallog (La) Thibund of drivers.-Waterloo (Ia.) Tribune.

er that present-day freshmen were hardly born in 1914. They were still in rompers in 1918. Seniors of 1930 at best were in the third grade. The war, which for us closed one great era and began another, for modern college students resolves itself into a great noise and a few dim memories at a nursery window. That is to be young indeed.

Handicapped.
Friend: I wonder, Ethel, that you allowed that Frenchman to kiss you in the conservatory. Ethel: I couldn't help it.

PENDER CHANGER BACA

OF CHRISTMAS PROGRAM Pender, Neb. - (Special) - The Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a community Christmas program here. About 1,500 sacks of candy will be given to the children and a children's program will be given in the opera house, Monday evening, December 22. The streets will be decorated with Christmas streamers and colored lights.

EIGHT HORSES LOST IN FIRE

Explosion of Lantern Results in Heavy Loss on Farm Near Randolph

Randolph, Neb. - (Special)-The barn on the John Brandt farm, six miles south of Randolph was destroyed by fire, Tuesday morning. Eight horses, large quantities of grain and hay, his garage, a new coach and valuable farm machinery was also burned. The loss is a heavy one, but is said to have been fairly well covered by insurance.

It is said the fire was caused by the explosion of a lantern which Brandt was using while doing his early morning chores about the

RESISTS RAISE LAND VALUES

Burt County Carries Its Case to Supreme Court of Nebraska

Lincoln, Neb. - (Special) - Arguments have been submitted in supreme court in the appeal where the county of Burt is contesting the action of the state board of equalization in raising land values in the county from \$102.86 to \$105.94 an

It is the contention of attorneys for the county that a finding of fact is a prerequisite to the action and that none has been made. They say the board should have shown that Burt county valuations had to be equalized with those of other counties or be brought within just relation thereto. They argue evidence did not justify the increase and that the court should take notice that Burt county is situated along the river, its lands being subjected to the action of the river and they are more hilly than Cuming, Dodge and Washington coun-

The arguments for the state board insist there was sufficient evidence to justify the action and that Burt county lands are as valuable as those in Dodge county, assessed at \$112 an acre; Cuming, assessed at \$115, and Washington, assessed at

Attorneys for the county contend that the board must justify its findings while attorneys for the state board say the county must prove the values to be clearly wrong.

TO FIGHT REINSTATEMENT OF OMAHA POLICEMAN

Omaha, Neb. -- (UP) - City council Wednesday postponed for two weeks the hearing of the application of Policeman Nick Sanko for reinstatement to the police force. Sanko was suspended a year ago following his arrest on a federal liquor charge. He was acquitted by a jury after his wife took full responsibility for selling liquor to undercover agents, asserting her husband knew nothing of the transaction. Sanko stands to lose a \$90 a month pension to which he will be eligible in eight months if the council decides against him.

Police Commissioner Westergaard and Acting Chief George Allen gave notice that they will fight Sanko's the grounds that an officer who didn't know his wife was bootlegging would be a poor man to enforce liquor laws.

SWEDISH CHURCH BODY

PLANS CHILDREN'S HOME Omaha, Neb. - (UP) - A children's home has been added to the building program of Swedish Evangelical churches of Nebraska, Iowa, Colorado and Wyoming, it is announced here. Previously it had been announced that a \$150,000 addition would be built at the denomination's hospital here and an old people's home constructed. The total amount to be expended approximates \$1,-000,000, according to Theodore Young, superintendent of the hospital. The construction work is expected to be completed in less than three years. COMPENSATION GOES TO

CHILDREN OF DEAD MAN Lincoln, Neb. - (Special) - State Compensation Commissioner Jeffrey has ordered payment of \$15 a week to be made to the minor children of Bert Pearson, lineman for the Interstate Power company at Long Pine, who was killed. The company's insurer had been making the payments to the widow who is now married again. The usual award is for 350 weeks in a case of this kind and the widow had received payment for 225 weeks. The other 125 payments will go to the orphans.

BROTHER AND SISTER IN DOUBLE WEDDING

Crofton, Neb .- (Special)-A double wedding will take place here when Anton Schieffer will marry Miss Clara Feldhacker and Bernard Feldhacker will marry Miss Helen Kuchler. Clara and Bernard Feldhacker are son and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ed Feldhacker of Crofton, who are the parents of 17 living children, 10 daughters and seven sons. One set of twins is included in the sons. Three of their daughters are married to three

HAS APPEAL TO **PARDON BOARD**

Former Wakefield, Neb., Banker Seeks Parole from Term in Prison

Lincoln, Neb.—(Special)—Charles S. Beebe, former Wakefield banker, will appear before the pardon board at its meeting December 9 to ask for a parole from the state peni-

Beebe was convicted in Dixon county, on a charge of forgery when, as a cashier of the Security State bank of Wakefield, he was accused of forging notes for the purpose of keeping the bank on its feet. Sentence was imposed in October, 1929, four or five years after the offenses occurred. He claims to have confessed these irregularities to the state banking department in 1927 when the bank went into receivership and says that he realized little personally from the transac-

Beebe is 60 years old and has served one year of a 1 to 20 years'

PIERCE COUNTY DAMAGE

ACTION IN HIGH COURT Lincoln, Neb .- (Special) -- Attorneys for John Kersenbrock have appeared before the supreme court in an appeal from the action of the judge of the Pierce county district court. Kersenbrock sued the Security State bank of Osmond and Joseph Cizek for damages on the charge that he was falsely accused of stealing hogs. He was acquitted of the charge of theft. In the damage action the judge directed a verdict for Cizek and the bank on the ground that they had probable

cause to swear out a warrant. Kersenbrock says Cizek, a banker, acted without warrant of fact. He says he had borrowed as much as \$12,000 at the bank at one time and that he was a man of high standing. He said he took the hogs from a farm in payment of a debt under an agreement with a man named Hauswirth and that he did not know they belonged to the bank. His attorneys contend the question as to whether the defendants acted in good faith is an issue of fact for

WOMAN SENTENCED AS INTOXICATED DRIVER

Omaha, Neb .- (UP)-Police Judge Lester Palmer's war on drunken automobile drivers knows neither sex, race, creed nor color, he asserted in sentencing Mrs. Ruth Beneda, 26 years old, Cuba, Kan., to 90 days in jail.

The woman was arrested in South Omaha by officers who asserted she was intoxicated. Her car collided with a truck. She denied the charge.

DEATH CLAIMS PIONEER OF DAKOTA COUNTY

Homer, Neb. - (Special) - Mrs. Fred Stading, 84 years old, died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Fred Kipper, two miles northeast of Homer, Tuesday night, after a lingering illness. Funeral services will be at the home Friday and buria! will be in Ponca.

Mrs. Stading came to America from Germany in 1863 and to Dakota county in 1876. Children surviving are: Mrs. Fred Kipper and Frank Stading, of Homer; John Stading, of Dakota City; Herman Stading, of Lincoln; Charles Stading. Mrs. Julia Ehnke and Mrs. Julius Stark, of Ponca; Mrs. Frank Thomas, of Newcastle

The husband preceded Mrs. Stading in death seven years ago.

CO-OPERATIVE STORE AT LYONS CLOSES ITS DOORS

Lyons, Neb. -(Special)- The Lyons Co-operative general store, which has done an extensive business during the last 20 years, closed its doors, Tuesday, being unable to meet its financial obligations.

TOWN OF LYONS ALL READY FOR NATURAL GAS Lyons, Neb .- (Special) -The city of Lyons is piped and ready to be connected with the natural gas line recently constructed into this part

of Nebraska. The main line is about two miles outside of the city. MISSING FARMER BACK IN HIS NEBRASKA HOME

West Point, Neb .- After searchers had scoured the countryside for the last three days for Henry Muhle, a farmer living near here, he returned to his home late Tuesday night. Muhle disappeared Saturday night, abandening his car about a mile out of West Point. A cap and coat laid out on the Elkhorn river bank caused searchers to believe he had taken his life though unbroken ice disputed this theory. Hundreds

aided in the search. Muhle seemed to be greatly fatigued and he was suffering with a badly bruised foot, evidently received in a fall. A son gave out the information that his father said he had been as far as Omaha.

COUNTY OFFICERS TO MEET AT OMAHA DECEMBER 9-11 Omaha, Neb .- (UP) -- Five hundred members of the Nebraska association of county commissioners, supervisors, highway commissioners and county clerks and registers of deeds are expected to attend the association's 36th annual conven-

tion here December 9 to 11. FINE HOME AT CROFTON

DESTROYED BY FIRE Crofton, Neb. - (Special) - The 12-room residence of Mr. and Mrs. P. T. Malone was consumed by fire Monday. The fire is thought to have been caused by a defective chimney. All furnishings were saved, except several hundred quarts of canned goods in the base-

Q. When and where was Jesse James born? C. B. A. Jesse James was born in 1847 in Clay County, Missouri. He was killed April 3, 1882.

Pig Club Realizes Profits of \$1,073.16

Warner, S. D .- (AP)-A profit of \$1,073.16 was realized by nine members of the Warner 4-H sow litter club this year, Clarence Nelson, lo-cal leader, reported. The nine ithers raised included

of ples grown to maturity, an exceptionally good average. The value of the 61 pigs was \$1,742.32.

The secretary's book showed 12 tings held, with only two abclub participated in a community entertainment to raise money and sent three members to the state fair, and all members to the Tri-

State fair at Aberdeen. This is the sixth successful year of club work for the organization. during which time three delegates have been sent to the National Club congress at Chicago. The club has reorganized for its seventh

year of work. How Time Files.
(Elizabeth Winslow in the North
American Review.)
The world of those under 20 has

at least always been the same, chaos

realize that it must come that it is: whereas the world of anyone old enough to vote before

1914 vanished overnight. In remarking upon the changed attitudes and equipment of younger students, it is well to remember how surprisingly young they really are. Using 1914 or even 1918 merely as dates, ask any group of college students what they remember of the war, and let the trivality of their answers reveal how fast the

years have sped. "We have vacation Armistice day," someone will probably tell you; or "I saw a parade at night," or "The sugar was in little envelopes." It seems incredible, until we do a little counting and discov-

Friend: Why couldn't you? Ethel: Because I can't speak