

MURDER By An ARISTOCRAT

Mignon G. Eberhart

I did not know that Janice, too, had taken refuge in the friendly, fragrant shadows of the rose garden until I met her face to face when I rounded a curve in the silent, dark path. The moon was barely touching the trees, and the shadows were still dense, and I think we were both startled — indeed, rather frightened just for an instant — until we recognized each other. Then she said, "Oh, it's you, Miss Keate," with a kind of sob in her throat.

I have never known exactly how we began to talk or why she confided so freely in me. Perhaps she had to talk to someone. But I remember very well how we sat on the curved stone bench just in front of a rose tree that hung out and over our heads and made the soft dusk sweet with its fragrance, how white her dress and face looked, and how her hair seemed to blend imperceptibly with the shadows, and how, presently, the moonlight began to stretch gently along the path before us and then gradually to touch the tips of her white slippers.

I believe she began to speak of Dave, for I remember that she asked me a number of questions about veronal and the effects of the drug when taken as a habit. I answered as far as I could. "His death, then, was peaceful," she said at last. And when I told her yes, that he had died in his sleep, she seemed a little relieved.

"He looked peaceful," she said, as if to herself. "So peaceful that one might almost envy him." And as I made some startled expostulatory comment, she said, "Oh, no, I didn't mean that, of course. One never really means that. But it has been a dreadful, dreadful time, Miss Keate. I should never want to live these days over again. I wonder if ever in my life I shall be able to forget them. Forget any of it?" she paused and added in a low voice which held a note of horror which gave me suddenly a measure of the nightmare her days and nights had been since Bayard's death—"forget Bayard's blood on my hand."

She lifted her hand as if to see whether, even in the shadows, the stain still was visible, and I reached out and took the slim white blur in my own clasp. Her fingers were cold and clung to mine as those of a child caught in some bad dream might cling. And all at once she was telling me what happened.

"I moved Bayard. I moved him. He was in the study, you see, there on the small Sarouk rug by the desk. I didn't know what to do. All I thought was that he must not be found there in Dave's study. We all knew that Dave had tried once before to kill him; had actually shot at him and Bayard's shoulder was wounded. That's when you came. I knew, too, that I had no time; that Adela would be coming into the house in just a moment or two. I had glanced into the library as I was about to pass the door; I saw the study door open and went to look to see if Dave was there, and there was Bayard. Dead, on the rug."

She took a long tremulous breath and almost visibly steadied herself.

"It took only a second to be sure he was dead. And I thought, 'He must not be found here in Dave's study. The room that is Dave's. He must not be found here.' So I — I set the baskets down, and I bent over, and I had to drag him — drag him, hold him by the arms and drag him out of the study and into the library. It was ter-

ribly difficult. And I had to hurry. I got as far as that table, and I left him there on the floor, and I ran back and straightened the rugs that had been pulled up and took the baskets and ran to the kitchen and left them there. I didn't know what was on my hand until I had reached my own room. I don't remember why I took off my hat; habit, I suppose. But I looked at it and saw the stain. And just then Emmeline, downstairs, began to scream, and I knew she had found Bayard. I hid the hat and washed my hand and ran down the front stairs. And there you all were in the library."

She shuddered and stopped. "You'll feel better now," I said. "It is a good thing to talk of it to someone. I suppose Dave must have returned and got into the house somehow and — shot Bayard."

"I don't know," she said. "I don't know. I don't want to know."

"Didn't you say Bayard was downstairs when you left the house early in the afternoon and that you spoke to him?"

"Yes. He was downstairs. I had gone to the kitchen to get the baskets for the eggs and butter, and I thought I would take Mrs. Steadway some flowers. I stopped in the library to get some scissors I had accidentally left there that morning, and Bayard was there."

"Did Dave keep the door to his study locked?"

"Not as a rule. It was a set rule in the household, you see, that he was not to be disturbed. There was no need to lock the door."

"And you spoke to Bayard?"

"Yes. But only a word or two. Not," said Janice, "a pleasant conversation. He said he would give us till night to decide what we would do about the letter. My letter. I took the scissors and put them in my basket and left. I was nearly frantic, but there was nothing I could do. Bayard thought that in the end Allen would give him the money he wanted in order to protect me, and I suppose Allen would have done just that, but I so hoped we could discover a way out of it without that."

"But if Dave killed Bayard, what about the diamonds?"

"I don't know. I don't understand about the diamonds. But I think that someone in the family put them in that jar of bath salts merely because they would be thought to be quite safe there. It would have to be someone who knew I don't use bath salts."

"You don't think, then, that it was a deliberate attempt to make it look as though you had taken the diamonds?"

I could feel her astonishment.

"Oh, no," she said after a moment. "Why should anyone do that? There would be no point in my taking the family diamonds. Many of them were to come to Dave's wife anyway—were, in fact, already mine. Oh, no, it wasn't that. I think—perhaps I ought not to tell you this, Miss Keate, but I think that Adela or Evelyn somehow managed to get the diamonds out of the safe merely to give an appearance of burglary. I know," she said sadly, "that we all feared Dave had killed Bayard and tried to shield him."

"What were the circumstances of Dave's first attack upon Bayard? You told me you didn't know why they quarreled, but can't you think of anything that might have caused trouble between them?"

"I didn't know when I talked to you before, Miss Keate, but now I believe I know. I think Bayard was supplying Dave with veronal. The drug is hard to get in this state, you know. And there's nothing Bayard would have liked better than to ruin Dave—or Hilary, or both. He's always hated them. I suppose he was jealous of them. Or perhaps the whole thing dated back to something in their childhood. And Bayard was thoroughly bad. He was unbelievably bad."

"Why do you think Bayard was supplying Dave with veronal?"

"I'm not sure that he was. I only heard a few words of their quarrel. But there's nothing else they could have quarreled so dreadfully about. Dave hasn't been well in a long time, and lately he's been growing more and more unlike himself. Of course, Adela and I knew, though we never talked of it, that he was taking some drug. I thought it was morphine, though I could never be sure. We did everything we could to distract and amuse him. We watched him so carefully. We tried everything. It's been rather bad here for the last two years, Miss Keate."

She paused, staring thoughtfully into the shadows for a moment before she continued sadly:

"I don't know whether Hilary knew or not. It was nothing we liked openly to discuss. I suspected Bayard, but not for any definite reasons; it was a sort of instinct. I dreaded his visits here. But when Florrie took veronal by mistake, and you said you had no veronal, and I knew that Bayard had hidden my letter in your bag, I felt sure that he had also hidden the veronal in your bag. He had had access to it, and he would know it was not safe to keep the drug openly about the room while he was ill. If he was furnishing veronal to Dave he would undoubtedly ask a large price for it. What more likely than that he asked more than Dave would pay? Or held back a supply of the drug? If poor Dave was like drug addicts usually are, he would be frantic for it. That's my explanation for Dave's frenzied quarrel with Bayard. I think Bayard goaded Dave until Dave was beside himself. Poor Dave—he must have hated himself, and he must have hated Bayard for the hold he had. Do you think I am right?"

"It sounds quite likely that Bayard supplied him with veronal," I said. "And if Bayard hid your letter in my bag, which is the only reasonable thing to suppose, he could easily have hidden the veronal he had with him in the same place. He would think it a safe place in case anyone searched his room. But, of course, if this has been going on for two years or more, they must have had some systematic system of supply. Just what happened the night Bayard was shot and Dr. Bouigny called me?"

"I don't know exactly. They were in Bayard's room, Dave and Bayard. I couldn't sleep that night, and I had heard Dave moving about in his room and the door into the hall closing as I supposed he left the room. In a short time I heard him come back, and pull open a drawer, and then leave again. He seemed hurried, and I don't know why I immediately thought he'd come back for his revolver. But that's what I thought, and I hurried out of bed and after him. It had taken me a moment to get into a dressing gown and slippers, and Dave was already in Bayard's room when I reached the hall. Adela must have been awake, too, for just as I passed her door it opened, and she came out, and before we had time to speak we heard—"

Again she steadied herself. "We heard a revolver shot. It was so loud—I can't tell

you how dreadful it was. We ran to Bayard's room, and Dave was standing there aiming the revolver again, and Bayard was swearing terribly and had his hand over his shoulder, and it was bleeding all on his pajama coat. And Dave looked white and dazed, as if he didn't know what he was doing. As if he were another person. Adela ran and seized his arm and I managed to get the revolver away from him and out of sight while Adela talked to him. When I came back Dave was beginning to look less queer, and Adela took him to his room, and I looked at Bayard's shoulder and put cold water on it, and by that time Emmeline and Florrie were in the hall, and Adela was back, and she told them what we told everyone. That Bayard had had an accident. It was foolish, of course, but we couldn't say Dave shot him. Adela sent Florrie to telephone to Dr. Dan, and he came right away and dressed the wound and said Bayard would recover. That he was not seriously wounded. What a relief that was!"

"But didn't Dave explain why he had tried to kill Bayard?"

"No. No. He said nothing. That made it worse, somehow frightened Adela and I were. We were desperately afraid Dave would attack Bayard again. We tried to hide our fear, act as if there was nothing. We tried to keep the two men apart. Adela insisted on a nurse coming in the hope that she would—that your presence would in a measure protect Bayard. And thus protect Dave; it was Dave we cared for. Poor Dave."

She sighed, and after a moment said thoughtfully: "I was very young, you know, when I married. I didn't know. I didn't know anything about love. I didn't know—"

She paused, her face turned a little away from me as if the darkness were kind to her. The moonlight lay, by that time, white on the roses, and the fragrance was heavy and sweet, and the shadow over the bench black and soft and cool. Janice said in a voice that was not steady:

"You are very good to me, Miss Keate."

"? Nonsense!" I said brusquely. And repeated, "Nonsense!"

She moved, took a long breath, and said gravely:

"Is there anything else, Miss Keate? I want you to know the whole truth."

"Well, yes, there is," I said promptly. "There are several things, in fact. It was you who tried to enter Bayard's room from the hall that first night I was here, wasn't it? You tried the doorknob, and while I was unlocking the door returned to your room and watched me in the mirror?"

"Yes," she admitted at once. "I didn't think Bayard would need night care, so I supposed you were in your own room. I hoped, of course, that I could get into the room and by some lucky chance discover my letter while Bayard was asleep. I knew that Dr. Dan must have given him a bromide, and I thought there might be some small chance of my success. I was desperate, or I wouldn't have tried."

"Who then was on the balcony that night?"

"What do you mean? Was someone on the balcony?"

I did not explain. At a sudden memory I said:

"Had the dog followed you to Bayard's door? I thought I heard a sort of panting sound. Like a dog on a hot day."

"Yes," said Janice and added, "It was rather horrible, wasn't it? I felt so furtive. Stealthy. Ashamed. It seemed to me even Pansy must know what I was doing and why."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Divided on Way to Brew Coffee

In the old days when coffee was expensive and hard to get, cooks kept their methods of brewing it a deep dark secret. Coffee brewers fell into two schools: The boiling point advocates, and the below boiling point advocates. The boiling point group was composed of those who drank coffee for the stimulation it imparts. This method includes the old-fashioned boiling formulas where the water is kept bubbling a few seconds or minutes after the addition of the coffee, after which it is set on the back of the stove to steep for fifteen minutes or so. This procedure gives a stronger flavor and extracts a larger amount of caffeine.

The below boiling point advocates were composed of those who drank coffee chiefly for its aroma and flavor. Taste and smell are more closely connected than the average person suspects. You easily can prove it for yourself by holding your nose when you eat or drink. The only flavors you can taste without the help of your nose are sour, sweet, bitter and salt. Every other flavor is not tasted, but smelled. Try holding your nose when you drink a cup of coffee, and you will be surprised to find that you can taste nothing, unless, of course, you use sugar. Then you can taste the sweet, but not the coffee flavor. Now release your nose and see how quickly you recognize the taste of coffee.

The below boiling point method gives a liquid with more of the natural aroma and flavor of the roasted coffee bean. These cooks bring the water to a full boil, but take it off the fire a moment or two to stop its bubbling before the coffee is added. The beverage is then kept hot until it has acquired the right flavor, but it is not allowed to come to the boil. Coffee made by either method had to be cleared with a dash of cold water or the addition of egg shells.

Today the best coffee cooks have turned their backs on old-fashioned methods because of the difficulty of extracting just the proper amount of flavor from the elusive bean. Again they divide into schools: The percolator advocates and the drip coffee

advocates. The former make their coffee by a device that passes the water up a central tube to descend through the coffee, the main body of which never comes to a boil. The drip coffee lovers use the French method of pouring boiling water through finely ground coffee placed in a receptacle lined with filter paper.

Some people insist that coffee making is a lost art. Since it has become inexpensive and easy to get, people take coffee drinking for granted instead of making it a rite. Whatever the truth may be, coffee has survived its critics, outlived its restrictions, and holds an enviable record of long popularity.—Exchange.



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WOMAN ENJOYS JUNGLE RANCH

New York — (UP) — A woman who gave up her career when her husband's work took him to the interior of South America is the hostess of the first "dude ranch" ever established in the jungles. This feminine pioneer, Mrs. Richard C. Gill, presides over the Hacienda Rio Negro, a guest

ranch, built three years ago on a jungle-enclosed site 5,000 feet above sea level, half way between Guayaquil, chief seaport, and Quito, the capital of Ecuador. Mrs. Gill, who returned to New York with her husband recently on the S. S. Santa Clara of the Grace line, is enthusiastic about her jungle home.

The jungles, she said, are an ideal place in which to live. Entertaining guests is an easy task, as she sees it. To begin with, there's never any fear of guests becoming bored. During the day

there are exciting monkey and jaguar hunts and there is volcano climbing. At night a tropical moon, haunting native music and the magic jungles relieve the hostess of all worry.

In addition to her duties as hostess, Mrs. Gill finds time for her flowers and pets. In her garden are fern trees 12 feet high, bougainvillea, carnations, exotic jungle flowers, and 28 different varieties of orchids. Mrs. Gill's pets are equally as varied — monkeys, macaques, dogs, parrots, macaws,

parakeets, a honey bear, and a mar-moset.

Pigeons Averaged 50 Miles an Hour

Auburn, N. Y. — (UP) — An average of more than 50 miles an hour was maintained by the fastest of a score of racing pigeons in a flight from Youngstown, Ohio, to Auburn, a distance of 250 miles. The birds were liberated at 7 a. m. and the winner arrived in Auburn at 11:42 a. m.