

# Murder Masquerade

—BY—  
**Inez Haynes Irwin**

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TUESDAY—Continued

When Margaret Fairweather appeared in the doorway, my thoughts, curiously enough, flew at once to Bessie. It was the common devastation in their faces which linked them together in my mind. Bessie's face had turned the strange gray which dark skins assume under torment either physical or mental. Margaret's flesh had gone waxen. Hers might have been a dead face—if it had not been for the burning intensity of the harrowed eyes.

"I went over to the police station to see you, Patrick," she announced in her strange, dead voice, "but they told me that you were here."

Patrick drew a long sigh. By its depth, I gauged the extent of his relief. "Is there something I can do for you, Margaret?"

Margaret looked at him hard. "I must talk to someone," she said. "I have a strange story to tell you. You may find it on the surface unbelievable. I can only say that I am telling you the exact truth."

Patrick remained silent.

"About a week ago, Ace Blaikie called at the house and asked me if I would lend him some money. For many reasons, I did not want to lend Ace any money. I did not like him in the first place. In fact—Suddenly her dead eyes blazed. "In fact—I hated him. I did not trust him either. When he told me how much he wanted to borrow, I was appalled."

Patrick said, "How much was it?"

"Ten thousand dollars," Margaret answered.

Patrick whistled. I said nothing. I could not speak.

"What did Ace want that ten thousand dollars for?" Patrick asked.

"I don't know," Margaret answered. "Perhaps I could guess, but I'd rather not." She looked pleadingly at Patrick.

"You're right, Margaret!" Patrick approved. "Let's confine ourselves to the facts. Did you lend him this money?"

"Yes—but not at once. I told him I would have to think it over. I knew that I would have to take that ten thousand out of my principal."

"He called more than once?" Patrick interrupted.

"Yes, four times. I have the days in my diary. Ace stipulated—requested I mean," she corrected herself with the careful honesty typical of her, "that I give him a certified check. It all took time, but he kept hurrying me. He wanted the money, I felt, for something special."

"When was the last time he had been in your house before that?" Patrick asked.

"Ace Blaikie had not been in my house for twenty-five years," Margaret replied.

"Did you give him the money?" Patrick asked.

"Yes."

"When?"

"The night of the masquerade."

"Where?"

"In Mary's Spinney."

Patrick sighed again. "About what time was it?" he asked.

"A little after ten thirty."

"How were you dressed?"

"I wore a black dress, a black scarf over my head, a big black lace shawl of my mother's."

"How did you go to the Spinney?"

"I walked up the road toward the Park, turned off at Mary's path, walked past the Little House and met Ace—" She paused bleakly.

Patrick waited.

"At the exact spot where they found his body," Margaret concluded.

A pause, pregnant with awful possibilities, whirled between us three.

"Did your interview take long?" Patrick asked gently.

"No, it took scarcely a moment."

"Could you reproduce it for me?"

"Easily." I said, "Here is the check, Ace." He said, "Thank you! Here's my note for it!" I handed him the check and he handed me the note. I have it with me. Would you like to see it?"

"Yes—thank you, Margaret, for thinking of that."

Margaret took a folded piece of paper from her hand-bag and handed it to Patrick. He examined it on both sides, held it up to the light. "Will you trust this with me for a while?"

"Certainly, Patrick," Margaret replied.

"By the way, Margaret, who'd you make it out to? Oh yes, you'd have to make it out to Ace."

"Yes."

Patrick whistled. "That compli-

cates things. Perhaps there's somebody boob enough to think he could murder Ace and then forge Ace's endorsement on the check. Has the check been cashed, Margaret?"

"No. The day I heard of Ace's death, I went over to the bank to stop payment. They said I couldn't do that without a court order. They told me it hadn't been cashed."

"Well, we'll watch that point anyhow," Patrick assured her. "Was that all you said?" Patrick went on.

"No. I said one other thing and it was the only other thing I did say. I said, 'Ace Blaikie I hope you die the death you deserve!'"

Patrick stroked the back of his head, then he clasped his hands there and let his head rest against them. "What did Ace do with the check?"

"He took off his helmet and put the check inside—in the sweat-band."

"Was there anything else?"

"Nothing—so far as Ace was concerned."

"Did you see Tony Torriano go off into the bushes?"

"No."

"You say, 'Nothing—as far as Ace was concerned.'" Patrick's voice held an interrogative note.

"As I went back over the path, I thought I heard a stir in the bushes."

"Not loud then?"

"No, a mere stir! A cat might have made it."

Patrick's Irish gray eyes had turned brilliant. He still rested his head against his clasped hands. For a moment he did not speak, but his eyes never left Margaret. She did not speak either.

"Margaret," Patrick began, "you and I are old friends and we've known each other for forty years and perhaps longer. You know that I've always been fond of you and



I Thought I Heard a Stir in the Bushes.

Flora, that I respect you and that I trust you. But I'm the police chief here in this town. And it doesn't make any difference what I think, or believe. My business is to prove. I believe your story of course. But Margaret, I must ask you some questions. Maybe you won't find them pleasant. I've got to do it though."

"Ask any questions you want, Patrick," Margaret said.

"Well, if I were a jury, the first thing I'd want to know would be why you were willing to lend Ace Blaikie so much money, especially when you hated him."

"I did it to prolong my sister's life. I made up my mind that Ace should not enter our house again. The last time he came, he said that if I couldn't lend him the money, perhaps Flora would. I knew if he made up his mind to see Flora, nothing on earth could prevent him from getting to her. And I was sure a meeting with him would kill her. I was in agony every time he was there for fear Flora would hear his voice."

Again silence. Margaret saved Patrick from asking the question that hung almost visibly on his lips. She went on. "Ace Blaikie made love to Flora when she was a slip of a girl. She fell in love with him. She loved him with her whole heart and mind and soul. And when he transferred his affections to a mere light-of-love in Marshbanks, it nearly killed her. She was never the same girl afterwards. She never recovered from that. She has loved Ace Blaikie all her life. She loves him still. She can't help loving him. But she hates him too."

"No check was found on Ace's body," Patrick informed her.

"I know," Margaret arose to her feet. "I realize perfectly, Patrick, that I am now under suspicion. I hope you won't have to arrest me for a while. It would kill Flora. She doesn't know Ace is dead yet."

"I shan't arrest you for the present, Margaret," Patrick assured her. "I will ask you not to leave Satuit—not even for a day."

It seemed to me that the entire town turned out to Ace Blaikie's funeral. It was held in the white vine-covered church, the most spacious in town. The service was brief. When the pall-bearers bore the flower-wreathed coffin out of

the building, a sound of weeping, like a dreary wind, ran through the church.

"I did not want to go to the grave, but I did. Somehow, most deeply I desired not to see what had been the splendid body of Ace lowered into the earth. . . . Given over to decay. . . . Yet I went. A large group of his friends accompanied Ace. Bruce Hexson was not there. Mrs. Thelford told me that he was so sick with a bad cold that he wouldn't be able to enter Ace's will for probate before Saturday. I saw both Doctor Marden and Caro.

"I wish you hadn't felt obliged to go to this funeral, Aunt Mary," Hopesstill greeted me, when I returned.

"I didn't feel obliged," I answered, "but I wanted to go. Ace was one of my oldest and dearest friends."

"Was Caro there?"

"Yes," I answered.

"She wasn't intending to go," Hopesstill explained. "We were planning to go places and do things together this afternoon, to get this horror out of our minds. But after luncheon, she telephoned me that her grandfather insisted on her attending the funeral."

"They sat together," I said.

"Doctor Marden looked frightfully exhausted. This terrible thing has worn on him as much as anybody."

"I don't see why he made Caro go," Hopesstill grumbled. "She says she hates funerals. She knew Ace, of course, but not awfully well."

"Well, I suppose he has the French point of view," I explained. "He's lived many years in France. There they make so much of death. Funerals and burials are extremely important events."

"I don't think Caro liked Ace particularly," Hopesstill declared. "Although I don't know why I bring that up when he's dead—poor old Ace!"

The telephone rang and Hopesstill answered it. "Yes, she's here. Yes. Yes. Come right down!" Still holding the transmitter, he looked over at me: "Caro Prentiss is coming here."

"That's nice. She'll be just in time for tea."

It seemed to me that there was an air of suppressed excitement about her; for as we drank our tea, her foot tapped the floor. Once I intercepted an interrogative look in Hopesstill's direction.

The instant I put my cup down, Caro and Hopesstill put their cups down. Hopesstill arose and came toward me. As though unconsciously drawn, Caro arose too, walked to Hopesstill's side, stood with him looking down at me.

"Aunt Mary," Hopesstill said, "Caro and I want to take you—Now don't get weepy and don't say no—we want to take you down into the Spinney. We want to show you something. I think I can give you my word, Aunt Mary, that when you see what we have to show you, you'll be glad you did what we asked."

Caro's lovely voice reinforced him. "Please, Mrs. Avery, please, please come! It's something lovely."

"I'll go, children," I agreed. And then, "May Sylvia come too?"

"Yes," they chorused, "we want Sylvia to come."

"Caro and I will go first," Hopesstill declared. "And you and Sylvia walk behind us."

I followed those two about the piazza, down the steps at the side, over the path into the shade of the Spinney.

Uncontrollably I began to tremble.

I fixed my eyes on the two beautiful young creatures ahead. Light and shade poured a checkered stream upon them. That stream flowed over their figures and poured into the earth. My trembling grew. Suddenly they stood aside from each other, stationed themselves one on either side of the path. Between their sentinel figures, I glimpsed—

What a transformation!

My path had ceased to take its regular turning; it curved into a great loop to the left. And on the spot where Ace's body had lain was—

"Did you two children do this?" I asked.

They nodded. I think I shall never forget the look on Hopesstill's face; its anxious wistfulness. But Caro, more confident, smiled in a happy pride.

"I picked up two braves to help with the rocks," Hopesstill added. "And Caro went around to all your friends and begged flowers from their gardens. She did all the planting."

To the right of the new path and opening directly on it was a rock garden. Field stones—the round, lichen-covered stones of New England—made the four walls, made at the back a triangular rock garden whose top surface slanted towards the entrance. Tiny grassy paths of new-laid sod divided the rest of the walled space into tiny flower plots. And those plots were filled, crowded with petunias, deep purple, pale rose and white; snapdragons, wine colored, pink and tawny; phlox, flame-colored, pink and white; zinnias of every zinnia color; the star-like Pride of Oxford; borders everywhere of ageratum.

"It's beautiful!" I gasped. "It's exquisite. How on earth did you do it?" I took a swift mental foray backwards. "Why that's what you've been up to these two days!"

I added: "Children, you have done a wonderful thing. It wipes out the terrible memory of—"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson

By REV. HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST,  
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of Chicago.  
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Lesson for January 17

### JESUS THE WATER OF LIFE

**LESSON TEXT**—John 4:7-36.  
**GOLDEN TEXT**—Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. John 4:14.  
**PRIMARY TOPIC**—Jesus Answering a Woman's Question.  
**JUNIOR TOPIC**—How a Stranger Became a Friend.  
**INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC**—Jesus Meets His Greatest Needs.  
**YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC**—Jesus Meets Our Deepest Need.

Life, light, water, bread are elemental, fundamental things. Life must come from God. But it can exist only where there is light, and only God gives light.

It is therefore a blessed and significant fact that Jesus was declared to be the life of men. He also says of himself that he is the "light of the world" (John 9:5); "the bread of life" (John 6:35). In our lesson today we see Him as the one who gives "living water" (v. 10).

The incident at Jacob's well in Sychar took place when Jesus, leaving Jerusalem because of increasing hindrance to his work, goes up to Galilee. Unlike his Jewish brethren, who detoured around the land of the hated "half-breed" Samaritans, he "must needs" go through Samaria, "for there was a sin-sick soul that needed him."

Space will not permit a full consideration of all the beauty and the depth of spiritual truth found in this story.

**I. A Sinner Tactfully Approached** (vv. 7-15).

Every Christian is by his very calling a soul-winner. We dare not delegate this responsibility to the pastor or missionary. As soul-winners we are vitally interested in our Lord's approach to this woman who was far from God, apparently hopelessly involved in sinful associations, a citizen of a hostile nation and an adherent of another religious faith.

By asking a favor of her he tactfully placed himself (as does any petitioner) for the moment, on her own plane. He was not a distant, learned religious leader deigning to cast a bit of religious philosophy to her. He was a tired, thirsty man asking for a drink of water.

But he was more! He was the gracious Son of God, ready to give the water of life.

**II. A Moral Problem Faced** (vv. 16-18).

One may speak knowingly of the promises of God's Word, and may understand the "way of salvation," but one will never find peace and joy until there is a frank and open facing of sin in the life. Let us make no mistake at this point, for the moral law of God is the same now as it was on that far-off day when Jesus brought the woman of Samaria face to face with her own sin.

**III. A Theological Problem Solved** (vv. 19-24).

Possibly in an effort to evade her moral problem by theological discussion (a common practice in our day, too!), and partly because of her ignorance of true worship, she asks a question about a controversial matter relating to outward ceremony. Is it not a singular thing how men who know nothing of spiritual life delight in the propagation and defense of organizations, and in the conduct of outward religious exercises?

True worship is revealed (v. 23) as being (1) "in spirit." We do not cast aside all external helps to worship, but real worship goes through and beyond both place and symbol to real soul-communion with God (2) "in truth." Sham, superstition, hypocrisy, have no place in true worship. We can worship in truth only when we really know the truth. MacLaren rightly said, "The God to whom men attain by any other path than his historical revelation of himself is a dim, colorless abstraction, a peradventure, an object of fear or hope, as may be, but not of knowledge." Truly spoke Jesus—"We know what we worship" (v. 22).

**IV. The Messiah Declared** (vv. 25, 26).

Jesus honors this poor fallen woman by making to her his first declaration of himself as the Messiah. He is the high and exalted one, but he is at the same time the friend of sinners. To the learned ruler of the Jews, Nicodemus, he spoke of the new birth. To the poor woman of Samaria he declares his Messiahship.

And she forthright left her water pot and went to bring others to him.

**Height of Our Destiny**

It is from out of the depths of our humility that the height of our destiny looks grandest. Let me truly feel that in myself I am nothing, and at once, through every inlet of my soul, God comes in, and is everything in me.—W. Mountford.

**Love and Fears**

The warm loves and fears, that swept over us as clouds, must lose their finite character and blend with God, to attain their own perfection.—Emerson.

## On Judging Characters— Some Views to Hold in the Reading of Modern Books

THE desire to belittle the characters of those who have been held in high esteem for years, even for generations, is only excelled in these times by the determination to make heroes of those whose reputations have been unsavory. There is, of course, in all things a happy medium. No one is all good. No one is all bad. But it is the predominance of virtue or vice which sets its stamp on persons' characters, and causes them to be estimated good or bad accordingly.

Writers of biography are seldom readers. One of the greatest difficulties is in really getting at the truth about persons whether they be dead or alive. Biographers, living in the same period as those of whom they write, are unable to make delineations free from personal ideas or estimations, especially if the person about whom they are writing is known to them.

**Individual View Point.**

It is for readers to make their own discoveries. They have this privilege and they should take it. Get acquainted with the facts as much as possible through perusing more than one biography. Get more than one other person's point of view. There are great men. There are little ones. To learn a few derogatory things about the former does not make them unworthy natures. The balance remains still for virtue. To find out good qualities in poor characters is delightful, but so long as flagrant misdeeds can merely be mollified and not erased, the person has to stand the brunt of his own deeds.

**Well Tempered Judgment.**

In reading biographies and in studying human nature it is well always to bear in mind that ex-

aggerating circumstances are present. Rarely are they absent totally. There are certain situations which exist, and complications which arise to influence action. Knowing these we become less harsh in adverse judgments, or more laudatory in favorable estimations according to how the character acts. We learn to detect the difference between the desire to undermine a fine character or to establish a poor one as good.

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**Rebuilding**

Rebuilding a ruined house or a ruined career is a much more difficult matter than building new. It takes more courage, more skill and more ability. But it is being done every day.

**Scolding may not mean much, but laughing doesn't make the baby cry.**

Environment makes the man; and it also makes him change it.

## Lots of Variety in Crocheted Edgings



Pattern 1300

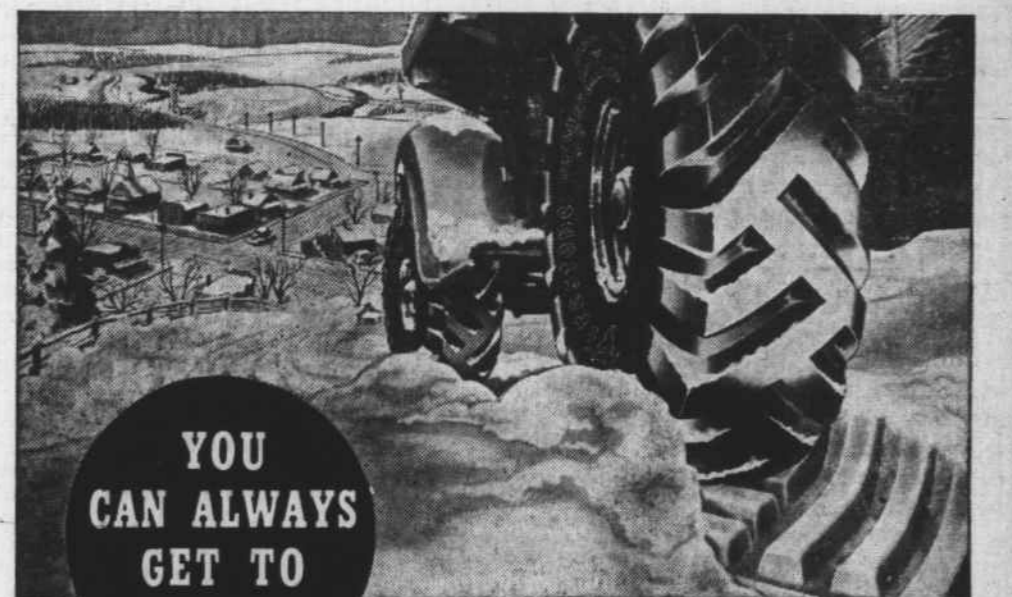
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## Wild Men Film Fans

The wild men of Borneo are becoming modernized. Instead of head-hunting, their chief hobby is collecting pictures of film stars. Travelers report that trophies hung round the Dyak tribal huts, in addition to enemy skulls now include the portraits of glamorous Hollywood actresses torn from old magazines.



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