

Death Among The Dunes

Introducing Dr. Mordacai Wescott, investigator, who solves the problem at Dune House, down among the sand-dunes on the coast of North Carolina.

By WILBORNE HARRELL

★ A Chowan Herald Fiction Story.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED

Josiah Fentress, millionaire-sportsman, has been found shot to death at his home, Dune House, on the coast of North Carolina. Dr. Wescott, eccentric private investigator, is called in to assist in solving the crime. The police suspect Octavia Fentress, Fentress's pretty wife, but Wescott disagrees with them and sets himself to prove Mrs. Fentress innocent.

The story is being told by Jimmy Maguire, newspaperman and chronicler of the exploits of Dr. Wescott.

Chapter Two

Dune House, the imposing home of Josiah Fentress, is situated on that narrow strip of sand that skirts the coast of North Carolina between sound and ocean. Sand dunes are numerous, and it was their prevalence that prompted Josiah Fentress to dub his home Dune House. Fentress had long owned this place but since his marriage a few years ago, he had made it his summer residence. The winters he spent either in Italy or Florida.

Among the residents of this coastal section, Josiah Fentress was noted for his philanthropies; in fact, any advancement that these people had made could be attributed either directly or indirectly to Josiah Fentress. From this I gathered that they would view with hostility any attempt on the part of Dr. Wescott or myself to prove the innocence of one they had already deemed guilty of the murder of Josiah Fentress. To these simple but wholesome folk, Fentress fell not far short of a paragon.

We had our work cut out for us, and it was to prove no easy task. I found myself imagining a beautiful woman caught in the toils of a foul monster, where she had been thrown to appease the wrath of some vengeful god. I could readily picture pretty little Octavia Fentress in just this predicament: sacrificed to the hangman that the majesty of the law may be upheld. You see, I had already begun to think of her as innocent just because Wescott had said so. That's what association with Wescott will do to you; he fairly exuded an aura of confidence.

Yet I knew I must not form an opinion so early in the game. Woman had committed murder, and beautiful women at that. I decided to at least reserve my verdict until I had seen the lady, which would be just as soon as we could get across the sound to Dune House.

A few hours later we were at Land's End awaiting Sergeant Crosby and his launch; he was to meet us here and ferry us over. I imagine this was a distasteful job for Crosby, for he and Wescott were always at dagger's point; although not enemies, they were pretty keen rivals, and I knew that this case was going to eventually boil down to a hotly contested affair between Crosby and Wescott. Sergeant Wescott would do all in his power and that of the police behind him, to fasten the guilt on Octavia Fentress. And knowing Wescott as I did I knew he would leave no stone unturned to extricate that lady from what, if allowed to continue, would be a shocking travesty on justice. Wescott, I knew, would act on the assumption of Octavia Fentress's innocence, which in his mind was now an established fact.

From where we were at Land's End Dune House was plainly discernible, standing out as formidable as any medieval fortress, as indeed it could easily prove to be, if Crosby were allowed to have his way.

I resolved right then and there that if it be within my power, I would thwart Crosby if I could.

If I appear to paint Sergeant Crosby too blackly, let me say that he is not at all the ogre you would imagine him to be from what I have written. Crosby was an excellent detective with bulldog tenacity that made him all the more dangerous, a quality that made him worthy of any man's steel. And Crosby was a square cop. I knew that if he came to see the case as Wescott saw it, Octavia Fentress would have no stauncher champion than Sergeant Crosby.

Beside Dune House, a pencil of stone against the sky, reared Shark-head Light. A beacon, would it illuminate the darkness that was gathering in foreboding shadows to engulf an innocent woman? Who could tell. As I gazed across the shimmering wa-

ter, I experienced a queer sensation that this Light was in some way a symbol that justice would be done; that standing starkly in its strength this tower would play no minor role in the drama to be unfolded.

Maybe I was hipped or daydreaming, but I could swear that Shark-head Light actually flashed me a signal, and I, a hardboiled newspaper man, and not at all given to seeing pink elephants or purple cows; and I risked my life many a time on a distillate of "what have you?" from the swamps of North Carolina, guaranteed to produce anything from green snakes to Barnum & Bailey's entire menagerie thrown in for good measure.

No, I wasn't drunk, unless Wescott's enthusiasm had gone to my head and induced a form of synthetic intoxication.

The salty tang of the sea, too, that now faintly came to my nostrils was like heady wine. I could imagine I heard the boom of the surf, the roar of the wind; I could see ships, clipper, galleons, caravels, fantastic sails penciled against a blue sky. All the tales of men who "go down to the sea in ships" paraded before me; the buffeting of merciless seas, the despairing cries of lost souls whose last port of call was the grinding oblivion of a rock-bound coast. At home, steadfast hearts waiting for ships that will anchor no more. Down on the beach the silhouetted lassie, with shaded eyes and heart full of aches and memories, scanning with a yet hopeful smile the horizon that had taken her lover...

Aw, hell! What had gotten into me! Here I was on grim police business and getting as mushy and as sentimental as a school girl. Suppose I did have a streak of romance in me that years of newspaper routine and contact with life at its worst had failed to completely kill. This was not the time nor the place for romancing—at least not for me.

I came back to earth with a thud.

"See that speck out there, Jimmy? Unless I'm mistaken, that's Crosby." Wescott had grasped my arm and was pointing to a small dot on the water that was gradually growing larger and taking on the shape of a boat. Soon, faintly, I could make out the putt! putt! of a gasoline launch.

"Yeah, that's a boat, alright," I said, "and it must be Crosby. The police wouldn't let anybody else off."

Wescott didn't answer and I continued, "I understand Fentress was throwing a big party when he was killed. That right? Then it must be Crosby."

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have been one of Fentress's swell friends, that bumped him off, and I'll bet there's a bunch of ritzy dames and gentlemen over there fit to be tied. Being invited on a pleasant week-end party and then getting mixed up in a nasty murder is not at all my definition of a good time."

Wescott turned on me with something approaching ferocity. "You're damned right! Murder is a nasty business, and that's why I make it my business to get at the truth of them if it's within my capabilities." (Continued Next Week)

HIGH, LOW MASSES SUNDAY EDENTON CATHOLIC CHURCH

Every Sunday (except First Sunday of every month, when First Mass in Palace Theatre, Windsor, at 8 A. M.), a High Mass (Missa Cantata de Angelis) will be sung at 8 A. M., and a Low Mass celebrated at 11 A. M., EST, each including Sermon, Holy Communion, followed by Rosary in Honor

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of Our Lady of Fatima for Conversion of Russia soon, Universal, Everlasting Peace, Sunday School, with Confessions for hour before Services, in St. Ann's Catholic Church, Edenton, stated Father F. J. McCourt, Pastor, who invites everybody to all Services. Week-days 7:30 A. M., Mass, Rosary, Saturdays 7:30 P. M., Choir meet.

Aromatic Transplanter May Increase Acreage

The recent development of a satisfactory aromatic tobacco transplanter could easily boost North Carolina's acreage of this small leaf crop.

R. H. Crouse, agronomy specialist for the N. C. State College Agricultural Extension Service, says the development of the transplanter will cut out about three-fourths of the labor previously required in planting the small plants in the field.

Transplanting was the major bottleneck, Crouse says, in the production of this leaf. The number of plants required per acre—between 60,000 and 70,000—required too much time to set in the field. The new and inexpensive transplanter will set the plants in 20 inch rows, spaced five inches apart in the row, in about one-fourth

Housework Easy Without Nagging Backache

When kidney function slows down, many folks complain of nagging backache, loss of pep and energy, headaches and dizziness. Don't suffer longer with these discomforts if reduced kidney function is getting you down—due to such common causes as stress and strain, over-exertion or exposure to cold. Minor bladder irritations due to cold, dampness or wrong diet may cause getting up nights or frequent passages. Don't neglect your kidneys if these conditions bother you. Try Doan's Pills—a mild diuretic. Used successfully by millions for over 50 years. While often otherwise caused, it's amazing how many times Doan's give happy relief from these discomforts—help the 15 miles of kidney tubes and filters flush out waste. Get Doan's Pills today!

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the time required when using the hand transplanter. Aromatic tobacco can now be cultivated and dusted for insect control by tractor.

This, along with other mechanical improvements such as the air conditioned curer and the wire rods on which the leaf is strung in the field prior to curing, may go a long way toward putting aromatic tobacco on a more competitive basis with other cash row crops in the Carolinas.

Guest Preacher At Presbyterian Church

The Rev. James MacKenzie, pastor of the Edenton Presbyterian Church, announces that the Rev. Jesse Parks, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Plymouth, will bring the message at the regular 11 A. M. service Sunday, July 12. A native of New Bern, Mr. Parks has held pastorates in North Carolina and Virginia, and has had extended experience in counseling ju-

venile delinquents at the detention home in Richmond. Sunday School will be at the usual hour, 10 A. M.

Tuesday evening at 7:30 the Boys' Brigade will meet. Prayer meeting at 8 P. M., Wednesday. The ping pong room in the church will be open every day except Sunday for those who wish to use it.

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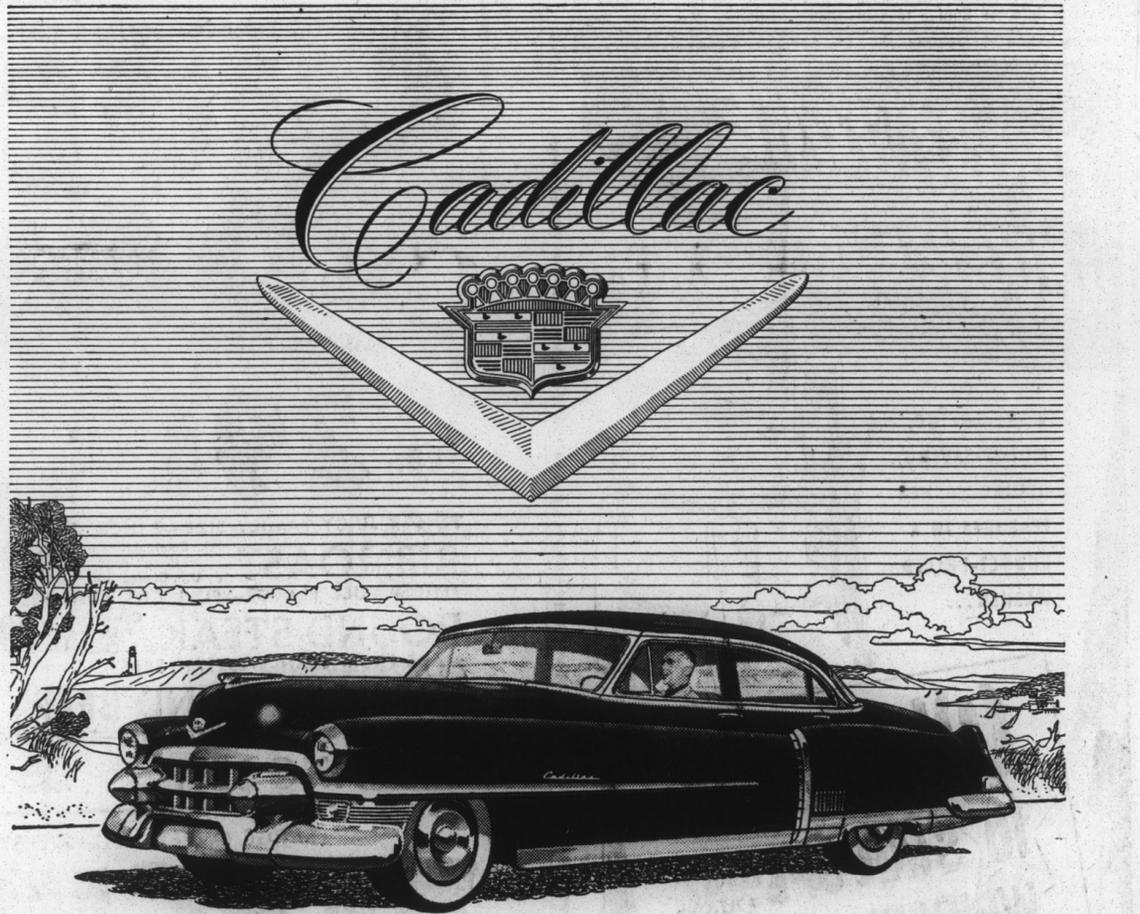
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interior, he's reminded that he has made something out of his years—and that, in itself, gives a lift to his spirits.

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