

MURDER IS FORGETFUL

CHAPTER VI
SYNOPSIS:—John Saxon, private investigator, and his partner Moe were hired by J. T. Smith, to guard Irene Smith, whose husband was murdered. Irene was suffering from amnesia. Kay, daughter of Irene, took Johnny across the bay to see her uncle, J. T. Smith, who explained to Johnny that he wanted the murder solved and Irene protected. On the return trip, someone with a silenced rifle fired at them. Kay and Johnny dived overboard and managed to reach shore without being hit by the would-be killer.

His question trailed off. Neither of them spoke, and the girl's slim fingers dug fiercely into his arm as she involuntarily held onto him.

A little distance away, still unseen in the darkness, someone was moving toward them. Footsteps made hushed scuffling sounds in the loose sand.

The girl must have been holding her breath, Johnny thought. He suspected that he was doing the same thing himself. The footsteps had paused. Somewhere back from the shore there was the sound of crickets in the quiet,

warm night. Neither of them had ever felt so alone in their life.

They crouched there on the beach, trying to hold their panic in, for what seemed an eternity.

Then the brilliant flashlight struck them full in the face.

A sharp voice said, "What's going on?" The tone of the man's voice changed and he exclaimed, "Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Kay—"

The light blinked out.

"It's all right, Steve," Kay got to her feet, a sigh of relief escaping her lips. She turned and touched Johnny's arm in the gloom. "It's one of the guards."

The fellow had sense enough to keep the flashlight turned off. Johnny imagined he had noted Kay's half-dressed figure.

"Someone tried to kill us, Steve!" the girl said. Her voice trembled again.

"No!"

The guard came closer. Johnny was vaguely able to make out his features in the night. He was a big, powerful fellow about thirty. He had close-cropped hair that looked blond in the darkness.

Johnny said, "He was hidden somewhere along the south shore. I think he was using a silenced

rifle."

The estate guard had been holding a heavy revolver in his hand. Now he holstered the gun. Johnny had an impression that his big jaw set with determination. "I'll get right down there and take a look—"

"Is there another boat handy?" Johnny asked.

"There's another one at the dock," said the girl.

"Fine. We'll use that," He looked at the guard as all three of them started along the beach. "I'd hate to see that speedboat lost at the bottom of the harbor."

"Except maybe the guy'll hear us approaching in the boat," Steve said.

"Don't worry, he's disappeared long ago," Johnny pointed out. "He wouldn't hang around."

"I guess you're right," the guard agreed.

"But we'll have a look anyway."

They had reached the path that led down from the main house. Kay said, "Be careful, now." She started to swing up the pathway.

"Wait a minute," Johnny said, joining her. He didn't think he should leave her alone. "I'll go with you. It'll only take a moment—"

"I'll be all right. Don't bother," Her voice was still nervous.

"I'll get the boat ready," the guard said.

Ahead of them there was a single, deep-throated bark, then the huge Great Dane had joined them. He rubbed up against the girl's bare legs and she took hold of him by the collar.

"Good boy, Michael," she said to the dog.

"I'll be all right now," Kay said. She still held the Great Dane by the heavy collar. "But you ought to change your clothes first. The speedboat can wait—"

"It's the first time I've felt cool in days," he told her. He thought it was nice the way she considered him.

He turned back and found his way along the path. A moment later he joined the husky guard on the boat dock. He could see the man's movements clearly against the night background of

the harbor.

"All set," Steve said. He bent down and held the small boat against the dock while Johnny climbed in. "We'd best not use a light. I still think it'd be better if we went by way of the beach. I'd like to find that guy, but he'll hear our motor."

Again Johnny pointed out, "He'll be gone, don't you worry."

They cast off, and the outboard motor made a lot of noise in the quiet night. It was only a matter of moments until they reached the south shore. The guard cut the motor and they drifted in, as he strained his eyes to pick out a landing spot. Johnny had pointed out what he thought was the logical spot where the rifleman must have been hidden. Foliage and trees were particularly heavy at that point, and there was no beach.

Low branches brushed against them as they bumped the shore. They climbed out, tying a line to a tangled stump.

Steve used the flashlight now, but at the same time he kept his right hand close to the unsnapped gun holster at his hip. His eyes were alert and hard. Johnny thought he looked like a fellow with a lot of nerve but not too many brains.

The place where they were searching was wild and unkept. There was not even a path along the shore. They pushed branches aside as they worked their way along.

From time to time, not far distant, there came the sound of a passing car along a roadway. Johnny motioned through the woods. "What highway is beyond here?"

"That's 25-A. It follows the shore."

"Let's go back there and see if a car was parked."

"Say, that's an ideal!" Steve plowed through the woods and brush, pointing the light beam ahead of him.

Presently they emerged along the highway. The road was winding and not very wide. Johnny didn't think there would be room for a car to park alongside the highway. Shoulders alongside the ribbon of cement were too narrow.

Two cars passed them, the hum of their motors quickly fading in the night. The highway swung down through a little hollow, and there was a circular area large enough to accommodate a

car.

Steve said, "That'd be about the only place along here where a jalopy could park. Let's look."

Johnny saw marks of tire tracks. The ground was hard-packed, dry and there was some dust. But not enough to take a good impression of tire treads.

However, directly in the middle of the indistinct tracks were one or two fresh spots of oil that had dropped from an engine pan. Someone had parked here, and very recently. Though there was no clue as to who that person might be, it satisfied a suspicion that had been running through Johnny Saxon's mind; the mysterious gunman had reached his rendezvous by way of the highway, the natural route by which he could make a swift escape.

"Come on," Johnny said to the guard. "Let's find that speedboat."

Returning through the woods, Steve asked him, "I understand you're out here workin' on the mystery around Martin Smith's death."

"You might call it working," Johnny said.

The estate guard looked at him as he held a tree branch aside. He was again leading the way with the light. His eyes were rather an expressionless pale gray.

"What do you figure about her?" he continued.

"Who?"

"Mrs. Smith . . . Irene."

"What about her?"

"Do you think she knocked off her husband and is just pullin' this can't remember gag?"

Johnny said, "Don't worry, it isn't a gag. The woman is really ill. She doesn't recall a thing."

"Then who done it?"

Johnny shrugged. "Find the person who tried to fill me and Kay full of lead tonight, and perhaps I could tell you."

Ten minutes later they located the high-powered speedboat not far from the spot where they had tied up the outboard. It was drifting close in to shore. Hooking a line to the second boat, they towed it back toward the boathouse. Apparently the shots had not damaged it seriously. There was no water in the cockpit.

As they docked, the guard said, "I'll take care of the boats. You better change your clothes. And tell Miss Kay not to worry. Anybody prowls around here tonight, he gets a slug."

"Just be sure it isn't me," advised Johnny Saxon.

Moe Martin wasn't in their room, Johnny had showered and put on clean clothes when there was a knock on the hall door.

It was Kay Smith.

She held a tray containing sandwiches and a cup of coffee. She looked scrubbed and clean and fresh, though her face was still strained from their recent ordeal.

"Hannah thought we were dining in Newport," she said to Johnny. "So I fixed this for you." She placed the tray on the writing desk, sat on the edge of the bed and looked up at him as he selected one of the dainty sandwiches. "Did you find—"

He shook his head. "We searched as far as the highway. It was someone in a car."

"There was fear in her eyes again. 'Maybe whoever it was . . . will come back?'"

"Hardly. Not now." He munched a sandwich. "These are very good—"

"I'm frightened, Mr. Saxon," the girl said tensely. She was standing up. "It's a terrible feeling . . . not knowing who shot at us . . . not knowing when the attempt might be made again!"

"They wouldn't enter the estate," he reassured her. "They'd know about the guards."

"You're positive?"

"Sure."

He wasn't though. He thought there was something very sinister about a person stalking you with intent to kill . . . especially when you had not the slightest idea who that person might be.

Kay was moving toward the door. "Mother's waiting downstairs." She seemed nervous. "She's asking for you again."

"How is she?"

Kay shook her head soberly. "No different. Every hour of the day I hope she'll suddenly remember things." Her voice broke a little. "That she'll remember . . . me . . . her own daughter."

"You'll find her with her sister, Nancy's staying here for a while. And there's Nicky Walker. They're in the library."

"Who's Nicky Walker?"

"A close friend of Nancy's. Mother's sister never married." She smiled a little. She had beautiful eyes, but they were troubled.

"I hope so," said Johnny. He stood there looking at the door

Stratford News

Mrs. Charlie Sanders has been ill but is improved.

Mr. and Mrs. Jess Sexton, Mr. and Mrs. Dock Mabe, of Twin Oaks, visited Mr. and Mrs. Alex Mabe, last Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Willie Hines and family spent the past week and with Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Hines. Mr. and Mrs. Breece Osborne and baby, also visited them last Sunday.

Derol Atwood, who holds a position in Bel Air, Md., spent last Sunday night with homefolks and returned to Maryland the next day.

Mrs. I. B. Richardson and Mrs. E. J. Mabe and daughter, Christine, visited Mrs. Carl Douglas in Sparta, last Sunday. They also visited Mrs. W. G. Richardson who is ill.

Regular church services were conducted at Prather's Creek church last Saturday and Sunday. Elders Gordon Hendricks and Mack Brooks were in charge of the service.

CARD OF THANKS

We wish to express our sincere thanks for the kindness and sympathy shown us during the illness and death of our mother and grandmother, also for the beautiful floral tributes.

George Crouse and family.

as it closed behind her. He thought she was a lovely, intelligent girl.

(To be continued)

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STATEMENT OF CONDITION OCTOBER 6, 1947

Resources		Liabilities	
Cash and Due From Banks	\$ 5,275,309.89	Capital Stock (Common)	\$ 380,000.00
Bonds, Stocks and Accrued Interest	14,618,124.11	Surplus	900,000.00
Loans	13,733,401.74	Undivided Profits	284,222.58
Banking Houses, Furniture & Fixtures Less Depreciation	122,030.70	Reserve For Interest Due Depositors, Taxes, Etc.	264,077.21
Other Assets	247,358.00	Other Liabilities	16,772.09
Total	\$33,996,224.44	DEPOSITS	32,151,152.56
		Total	\$33,996,224.44

EDWIN DUNCAN, Executive Vice-Pres.

ALTON THOMPSON, Cashier

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Auction Sale

FRIDAY, OCT. 24, 1947
 10:30 A. M.

Located near Blue Ridge Parkway, 1 1/4 miles from Saddle Mountain church.

Will Sell

25 acre poultry farm.
 6 room dwelling house with electric lights and running water.

One small barn and enough poultry houses to take care of 1000 laying hens.

650 White leghorn pullets (1/2 of these are now in production).

1 Good cow.
 1 300 lb. hog.
 1 Sawmill and power unit.
 1 1947 Jeep (actual mileage 3,500 miles.)
 1 Good wagon.
 1 Horse, age 7 years.
 Other things too numerous to mention.

Terms announced on day of sale.

ANDREW ALLEN,
 Owner

Ennice N. C.
 Johnny W. Spout
 Auctioneer