

MURDER IS FORGETFUL

CHAPTER XII
SYNOPSIS:—John Saxon, private investigator, and his partner, Moe, were hired by J. T. Smith to guard Irene, widow of his murdered brother, Irene was suffering from amnesia and did not recognize her daughter Kay, or others in the family. The night was broken from a scream from Irene's room. When Johnny rushed in, he found Irene in a faint. An investigation brought nothing to light. He did determine that either Nancy London, sister of Irene, or Nick Walker, a friend of Nancy's, had lied about their movement at the time. Nancy said she had taken a walk and Nick said she was on the terrace.

Moe Martin and the dog came into the library. To Johnny, the two of them made a perfect partnership. The Great Dane had attached himself to Moe.

Moe said, looking around, "Say, where is Nick Walker?" Then, turning to Johnny, he added, "I thought you'd be back with your tongues hanging out, so I made three drinks."

"Nick left," said Nancy. Her manner had changed again.

"Three's just enough," Johnny said, offering one of the glasses to the woman.

"She doesn't drink anything," said Moe. He sat the tray and one glass on a coffee table, reaching for Johnny's extra drink. "The extra one won't spoil." His round face looked cheerful for once. "I found five kinds of rum."

Johnny's eyes were amazed. He still held the two glasses. "Good God. I hope you didn't find anything else to put in them!"

"No," said Moe. "Just rum." Johnny held one glass toward Nancy England. "Try it, maybe it will do you good."

She looked up at him, something in her dark eyes. Her smooth hair looked like shiny mahogany around her ivory-white face. "Really, I don't drink."

"Try it."

Abruptly, as though with grim determination, she accepted the glass. Her fingers brushed his

own, and they were trembling. It was the one outward indication that she was deeply upset about something.

Johnny sipped the cool drink. It was good rum and, amazingly, Moe's blending had accomplished perfect results.

"It does taste nice," said Nancy England.

"Doesn't it though?" Johnny said, practically finishing his glass.

He watched Nancy. Now that she had made up her mind, the drink was disappearing with alacrity. He offered her one of his cigarettes.

The Great Dane lay stretched on the floor, head between his out-stretched paws, looking up at them out of one open eye.

"You think I can't duplicate them?" repeated Moe. "I made a whole shaker full."

"Why didn't you say so?" demanded Johnny. He put his empty glass on the tray, handed the tray to Moe Martin. He was somewhat surprised to see that Nancy England had finished also. He put her glass on the tray, too.

"I might as well just brine in the shaker," said Moe, ignoring the tray and going toward the hall.

Nancy sighed and rested her head against the deep cushion of the armchair. "It does make you feel cooler." She crossed her legs. Johnny observed that she had nicely rounded knees. He wondered why she didn't wear more stylish clothes.

"Yes," he agreed, "it sure has been hot lately. No rain out here at all, they say."

"That's right."

"Do you do much driving?" Johnny asked.

"Very little."

Nancy added, "Kay's the good driver in the family. My sister, too. . . of course, not right now."

"Naturally. . ." Johnny lit another cigarette. "I understand you are going to stay out here with Irene for a few days?"

"I'm sorry. . . what did you say?" Her eyes, now, did not center on him directly. They appeared slightly out of focus. It must be wonderful, Johnny thought, to get a belt out of a drink as swiftly as that.

"I said. . ."

Moe came in and Johnny stopped abruptly. "I feel mighty splendid," Moe announced.

"He's cute," said Nancy.

"Michael's cute, too," said Johnny. He bent down and rubbed the Great Dane's ears. The animal turned his head sideways and pushed his massive head against Johnny's hand.

Nancy's gaze left the rug. Her eyes had a liquid brightness now.

"What was I saying Johnny?" "I forgot. I forgot what I asked you."

She laughed softly.

With the comment, "I'll just make sure there's no more rum," Moe Martin started toward the pantry. Michael, the dog, trailed after him.

"Oh yes," Johnny lied. "It was about the novel." He picked up his glass from where he had set it on the rug beside the chair.

"The novel?"

"The book your sister Irene is. . . I mean, was writing. Do you think—"

Nancy said, "I don't think you'll find it." She got up, selected a satin-covered pillow from a divan, returned to her own chair and put the pillow behind her head. Outside of a certain unhurried deliberateness in her movements, she showed no signs of being intoxicated.

"Why?" prodded Johnny.

"I have an idea Irene destroyed the manuscript. She got tired of working on it."

Johnny got up and strolled over to the fireplace. He felt that he had to move around a little bit. The rum made his thoughts slightly fuzzy. Leaning against the fireplace, he looked across at Nancy England.

"What was the story about?" She shook her head. "She never said."

"Does anyone know?"

"I don't think so. . ." She looked at Johnny and smiled again. He tried not to concentrate on the unsmiling half of her face. Her right index finger was pushed against the tip of her chin, and her eyes were thoughtful.

Moe appeared in the door.

"I think I'll go to bed," he said. "There's no more rum." He bowed to the woman seated within the room. "Good night."

Johnny's eyes were thoughtful, almost harsh-looking, as he accompanied his partner to the foot of the hall staircase. Moe was asking, "Aren't you coming up? Everybody's in bed." He nodded toward the library. "I think you'd better send her to bed too. You won't find out a thing. Incidentally, there was something I wanted to tell you later," Moe added.

Moe Martin went up the stairs. The Great Dane, Michael, seemed undecided what to do for a moment. Then he followed. The animal looked awkward climbing the stairs.

In the large pantry, Johnny opened cabinet doors until he found the assorted supply of liquor. Selecting a bottle of the French brandy Nancy England had named, he opened it, obtained large-bowled inhalers and started back to the library. Homer, the butler, had just

come in the center hall entrance. His tall, straight figure, his severe features, made Johnny think of a sombre palibearer. He held a cap in his hand.

He saw the bottle and glasses which Johnny carried. "May I assist you, Mr. Saxon?"

Johnny said, "I'll manage."

"Very well, sir." He started to close the door. "If you don't mind, sir, I'll lock up the windows now. It's rather late, you know."

"Homer?"

"Yes, sir?"

"You had the evening off?"

"I did, sir. I just got back."

"You walked in from the main road?"

Homer nodded.

"The main entrance gates are locked at night?"

"Oh, yes, sir. And there is a watchman at the gatehouse. He closed the gates tonight right after Mr. Walker and Doctor Clark left."

"You saw them?"

"No sir. But John—that's the watchman—was telling me they were both here."

"And now the gates are locked for the night?"

"That's right. And no one would be permitted to enter the estate unless the watchman first called the house."

"I see," Johnny murmured. He turned and walked into the library.

He wondered what Nancy England had been doing near the mantel for he had the impression that she had steeled quickly away from the fireplace and gone back to her chair just before he appeared in the doorway.

His smile was again careless and gay.

He grinned too.

"No one would ever think you were a detective," Nancy England said.

Johnny looked at his shoes. "Do you think I look like a detective?"

She murmured something that sounded like "No." Johnny casually plied a package of cigarettes from a roomy pocket and fired up. He stretched his long legs out in front of him and kept watching Nancy England while the smoke curled up in the air. And he wondered if maybe this Nancy England wasn't pretty clever indeed. He hadn't been able to get anything out of her all evening. He'd asked question after question and all he'd gotten were evasive, half-finished answers.

Well, there wasn't much he

At Home On The Farm With The City Cousin

The passing of Thanksgiving—with thoughts it brings to mind of fruitfulness and bounties of the land—reminds me of the Tar Heel farmer whose hybrid seed corn was so good he was forced into the sawmill business.

I didn't believe it either, being the skeptical sort that I am. But Jerry Bason, Alamance County farm agent for the Extension Service out at State College, says that's the way it was told to him. The story we have gives us a

could do but give it another whirl, he thought.

"You say you live in New York most of the time?" he asked.

She nodded. "At the Barclay."

"I'll bet Nick Walker would rather have you stay out here."

She said nothing. Her eyes never rose above his chin when she looked at him. Then they glanced beyond him and Johnny heard a quiet movement in the room. Turning, he saw the butler moving to close the terrace doors.

Johnny's mouth was pulled straight across his teeth as he covertly watched Nancy England's eyes follow the butler's quiet movements.

The butler, finished, left the room. His movements were so quiet he reminded Johnny Saxon of a wraith. He thought perhaps Homer was sore about something. The man's features looked more severe than usual.

With the terrace doors closed the air in the room had become motionless and dead. Perspiration dampened Johnny's forehead.

He said, "Do you mind if I ask you a rather personal question?"

She looked at his chin. She studied various parts of his face except his eyes. "What is the question?"

"Are you going to marry Nick Walker?"

She stood up and walked over to the mantle. "Why do you ask that?" she said.

"Well," he said slowly, "I was under the impression he's loved you for a long time."

Nancy looked at him sharply. She started to say fiercely, "Nick doesn't know the meaning of—"

(To be continued)

picture of corn cribs bursting at the seams and a Country Cousin in the background who is trying to help undo some of the damage.

You see, Mr. J. T. Dixon, a pioneer hybrid corn breeder of Snow Camp, and a very conscientious fellow, too. He's assembling a saw mill to make lumber with which to build corn cribs for the farmers in his community who planted his hybrid seed corn this year, because, as he puts it: "The cribs just won't take care of the crop!"

I've heard some folks over in this land of plenty have allowed that the old seed producer was just joking about the thing.

Though maybe he'd stir up a little interest in his profession. Sell a few extra seeds, or something.

Well, all that may be true, but a recent check with the farm agent disclosed that one J. T. Dixon has assembled a sawmill!

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\$1,784,821 IN BEER TAXES for Counties, Cities and Towns

EVERY county in North Carolina, except two, and nearly all of the state's cities and towns have received checks in this first allocation of beer excise taxes to local government units. Yancey and Mitchell counties (blacked out on map) were excluded because the Revenue Act provides for distribution of malt beverage revenues only to "counties and municipalities wherein such beverage may be licensed to be sold. . . ."

THE 1947 General Assembly doubled the taxes on malt beverages and directed that half of the proceeds be distributed to counties, cities and towns where the sale of these malt beverages is permitted.

The new tax, amounting to two and one-half cents on each twelve-ounce bottle, went into effect July 1, and the first distribution of this money to local government units was made in November on the basis of July, August and September collections. Future payments are to be made annually.

This first allocation to local government units amounted to \$1,784,821.12.

To the participating communities this first payment was a substantial windfall. This was in addition to state, county and city license taxes paid by dealers.

Here is a new source of revenue for local government units. The money may be used for law-enforcement purposes, debt-reduction, or for any legitimate expenditure, thereby easing the burden of other taxes.

Thus BEER, America's Beverage of Moderation, is helping to meet the costs of local government, at the same time paying millions of dollars into state and federal treasuries.

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