

DEAD RECKONING

By BRUCE HAMILTON



Tim: "What have we this morning?"

Tim Kennedy, who has been writing a suicide note to himself in his wife's handwriting, graduated into homicide from the school of armchair murderers. At middle age, having made a fortunate marriage to Esther Ashwell, and possessing a lucrative dental practice and an enviable social position in a small town near London, Tim felt happy and secure. Then Esther was run down by a truck. Weeks later she was brought home, a physical wreck and a cripple for life, with only a hint of her former beauty left. Tim loses all interest in his wife because of her appearance. He suggests they hold their annual tennis party despite her condition.

CHAPTER 8

THE HEARTENING lie came easily to Tim's lips when he told Esther she would be playing tennis again in another year. He paused a moment, then added, with gentle insistence:

"Well, then, we'll settle for Saturday on the tennis party, shall we?"

She made a gesture of resignation. "Very well, Tim, I suppose you're right. I mustn't be selfish."

He sat down happily on the window seat, and took out a notebook and pencil.

"Well, then, . . . There's Harold and the Doughtys—our hardy perennials. And Cox—his wife's away, he must be a bit lonely. . . . And I think we ought to have someone a bit younger this year."

"What about Mr. Mower?" suggested Esther surprisingly. Kennedy frowned.

"Mower. . . I don't know about that. We hardly know him. . . . The Doughtys like him. And we never did much about it, after he called. Of course, there wasn't the chance. . . . But I think we ought to invite him. His being a dentist—it would be ungracious not to do something. As if we looked on him as a rival."

"Rival!—what an idea." Kennedy considered for a moment, tapping his teeth with the pencil. Eventually he decided to concede Mower, for reasons of his own.

"Very well, dear, if you think we ought to. . . . Put him down. . . . It seems to me we're rather short of ladies."

"Why not Phyllis Grantley?"

"All right, down with her. . . . Perhaps she'll pair off with Mower. We must find somebody for Cox. . . . I have it, Mrs. Shepherd."

Esther looked up quickly. "The woman who's taken Maybank?"

"That's her."

"She's a widow, isn't she?"

"I believe so—I've no official information. But she was in the surgery the other day, and she seemed a nice person. I think you'd hit it off with her."

"Is she attractive?"

Kennedy laughed easily. "I didn't notice particularly. Beautiful teeth; she looks after them properly. Tall woman, I think her hair's brown, but I didn't get the color of her eyes."

"Well—have her if you like, dear."

"Right. . . . that's seven; just about enough." Kennedy closed the notebook and looked at his watch. "Ten to nine—I must be trotting. I'll ring 'em all up between whiles this morning."

When Tim Kennedy said that he had not noticed the color of Alma Shepherd's eyes, he was guilty of a falsehood. They were of a very vivid blue, almost cobalt, and quite impossible to overlook. He had also noticed her warm, brown skin and full, rather drooping mouth, and her full, rich body, with its deliberate grace of movement. He thought she must have Spanish blood in her. She could not be more than 32—just the right age.

The lie about the eyes was not the only one he had told that morning—at least by implication. Up to last Thursday he had not thought about the tennis party at all. It was only during the week-end that it had occurred to him that the party was the simplest and most natural means of insuring further contact with Alma Shepherd.

It was necessary to act quickly. When she had come into the surgery on Thursday, telling him with her lazy smile how she had broken a tooth over an osso bucco in a Soho restaurant a few weeks be-

fore, starting a slight but persistent ache, he had seen at once that it would be impossible to make the work last for more than two sittings. There was a small cavity in one of the bicuspids, a simple affair that he could have polished off in less than half an hour.

But because a careful inspection revealed no other trouble whatever—he was far too conscientious professionally to make work where there was no legitimate ground for it—he decided to give the job an extra session, applying cocaine and putting in a temporary filling at the first one. The second appointment was for today, Tuesday, and unless he could make one now, an opportunity of seeing her again might not recur.

He left his car at Bentwich's Garage and walked slowly down the High Street, nodding affably to half a dozen people on the pavement. It was five past nine—later than usual, but today he had no appointment till 9:30. He liked to reach his office early, to fiddle with his instruments, put everything in the meticulous order he loved. He was feeling a little nervous. Alma Shepherd was second on his list, at ten o'clock.

It was not customary to extend social invitations on a purely professional acquaintance—and so short a one at that. It was fortunate Esther had been so easy. . . . But then, she had never been conventional in that way, though of late she had grown sharper, more possessive, almost jealous at times. . . . He wondered if Mrs. Shepherd would think the invitation bad form. He did not believe she was that sort. She had been very friendly and natural with him, though they had not spoken a great deal.

He turned into his entrance by the banisters of the stairway. Adams slept at the Wilderness, but always cycled down to the office, where he had a small retreat on the back landing below, about half an hour before his master. He gave Kennedy a cheerful, if slightly too servile, good morning. He was a thin man of medium height, with dark hair, a heavily corrugated forehead, and a pursed mouth that seemed to bespeak perpetual meditation. His manner was that of a certain type of regular non-commissioned officer or commissaire,—deferent to the officer class, sharp with rangers of uncertain standing, relaxingly affable with his cronies.

He was a famous billiards and darts player at the Goose Quill, but did not seem to have any other interests outside his work. He was paid twenty-five shillings a week with board, and gave full value for it, for he did a certain amount of valeting and work about the house

as well as making himself useful at the surgery. Kennedy was not sure that he liked the man particularly. He had claimed to have saved Kennedy's life during the war. Kennedy had no clear recollection of the episode, but did recall him as an officious little corporal. Thus, when Adams had accosted him on the street, he had given the fellow a chance—and had not regretted it.

Adams was inclined to drink too much, but he had never let that interfere with his work. Tim also suspected him of picking up occasional trifles, but he appeared to be scrupulously honest about money, though in fifteen years a good many opportunities must have come his way.

Kennedy addressed him pleasantly, "Lovely morning, Adams."

Adams, duster in hand, stiffened to a position of attention. "Yes, sir. Real spring weather, sir."

Kennedy let himself into his front door, and changed his light gray jacket for a white linen one that was hanging in the hall. "What have we this morning?" he asked Adams, who had followed him in.

"Young Master Johnson at half past nine, sir. Mrs. Shepherd at ten. Mr. Ross at ten-fifteen. Then Mrs. Leeming at ten-thirty."

"Two hours' job that, eh?" He had entered the surgery, and was washing his hands in the basin behind the Chinese screen. He was disconcerted to find he had been so careless as to give Ross an appointment at just that time. He recalled the occasion—Ross had telephoned, and in a hurried searching, through his book for an odd quarter of an hour he had noted the work, amounting to very little, which he had to do with Mrs. Shepherd, while unaccountably forgetting who she was. He picked one of the half-dozen spotted hand towels off the rail to the basin and came out into the room.

"Is that the lot, then?"

"Mrs. Truelove at half past twelve, sir, with the anesthetist." Kennedy nodded approvingly. With his more expensive patients he always engaged a separate anesthetist for extraction. It was the practice of better class London dentists, and it gave him a cachet. There were certain patients who could well afford the luxury, and liked the importance of it.

"Of course. . . . I may be a little late for Mr. Ross—a quarter of an hour or so. Apologize to him, tell him I've a difficult case—the usual stuff. Also to Mrs. Leeming, of course, if she's delayed."

"Yes, sir."

"Not that she's likely to be in a hurry. I'll have to give her a bad time, I'm afraid."

Adams' features relaxed into a smile. "Yes, sir."

(To Be Continued)

Capital Gossip

BY HENRY AVERILL

Daily Dispatch Bureau, In The Sir Walter Hotel.

Raleigh, Sept. 23.—Thad Eure, hand some secretary of state, promised to give Fayetteville folks a hot speech today when he held forth as a booster of the State Fair. If Thad tells his audience the story about pigs he voted to newsmen here—and which he vowed he will use down in the Cumberland capital there are going to be some red faces.

Just exactly one day after telling newspaper men he is opposed as a matter of principle to issuing "Proclamations," Governor Clyde R. Hoey was practically forced into making the first of his administration.

He has "proclaimed" Air Mail Week October 11 to 16, and mailed his proclamation to Major Paul Younts, postmaster at Charlotte.

The governor says he is always glad to issue "statements" backing any project he thinks worthy, but he does not like the formality of proclamations.

The report on Greensboro A. and T. Negro college, to be submitted by Holt McPherson, High Point Enterprise editor, on Saturday will not be public matter and its contents will not be divulged except at the complete discretion of Governor Clyde R. Hoey.

Mr. McPherson has conducted an intensive probe of affairs at the Guilford school since he was named as a result of repeated charges of various irregularities made by alumni and students of the college.

Word has been received here of the death of James Kelly, brother of Paul Kelly, assistant director of the Board of Conservation and Development.

"Now that the farmers of Eastern North Carolina have money in their pockets as a result of tobacco sales, we are beginning to have a hard time," said J. M. Grainger, engineer of the State Rural Electrification Authority. "With money, they want to get electricity and they cannot see why they shouldn't have service just about one day after making an application. I wish it were as simple as that, but it isn't."

Governor Hoey hit the speech-making trail again today, talking at the dedication of a farm building in Tyrrell county, under auspices of the Farm Bureau, and at Tarboro, where one of the Institute of Government's educational programs is to be held with both Democratic and Republican county chairman participating.

Webb Williams, associate member, is holding down the desk of Cutlar Moore, liquor board chairman, while the latter is in New York adding his bit to the fun and frolic being held by the American Legionnaires in the big metropolis.

WAR ON SYPHILIS IS PLAN OF BOARD

Daily Dispatch Bureau, In The Sir Walter Hotel.

Raleigh, Sept. 23.—"Peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must," we will protect the innocent against syphilis," declared Dr. Carl V. Reynolds, State health officer. "Persons infected with this disease will not be able to evade compulsory treatment, or imprisonment, if they persist in their refusal," he continued, "simply by moving from one county to another, or from one State to another."

"I am in receipt of a letter from Virginia asking me to notify the authorities here to be on the lookout for a syphilitic from that commonwealth who left to come to North Carolina. I am contacting the health officer in the community to which he is supposed to have gone, in order that he may be located and compelled to continue treatment, or go to jail."

"In the future, when a syphilitic moves from one North Carolina county to another, the health officer will be requested to notify promptly the State Board of Health and, in turn, the health authorities in the community to which he is supposed to have gone will be notified."

"So, you see, we mean business. The only way to see this thing through is to make a thorough job of it, and with the cooperation of our co-workers, we will do just that thing. I have a letter from a health officer who requested official blanks. He has in mind a syphilitic who will be formally notified to take treatment. If he refuses, he will be put in jail and he will stay there until he becomes non-infectious and will then be treated until he is cured."

"There is law enough on the books to wage an effective campaign or eradication, if it is enforced; and, so far as the State Board of Health is concerned, the provisions will be utilized to the limit. We will muster all the forces available to fight this disease from now on. No one who wishes to cooperate, whether infected or not, need have any fears—but, once again, 'Peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must.' That goes!"

BOOKLET AVAILABLE ON WATER SYSTEMS

College Station, Raleigh, Sept. 23.—Directions for installing inexpensive, hand-pump water systems in the farm home have been published by the State College extension service.

The circular, prepared by D. S. Weaver, agricultural engineer, includes illustrations designed to make the directions as clear and simple as possible.

North Carolina farmers who desire copies of the free circular may obtain them from the agricultural editor at State College, Raleigh.

The circular is extension folder No. 28, "A Complete Hand-Power Water System for the Farm Home."

A news story says ex-Kaiser Wilhelm now possesses a fortune worth more than \$75,000,000. Just as we suspected all along, it must have been two other fellows who lost the war.

E FIRD'S

Ladies' New Fall Coats

Sports coats in all new fall shades and snappy styles. Values up to \$14.95—

\$9.95

New Fall Coats

In much better quality. Heavier material in all fall colors,

\$12.95

Ladies New Rothmoor Coats, \$29.50 to \$59.50



Ladies' New Fall Dresses

All new fall shades and styles, a real buy—

\$5.95

Better Ladies' Dresses

The newest styles and colors. You will be proud to wear one of these dresses—

\$7.95



Shoes Shoes Shoes

Ladies' new fall oxfords, ties, straps, pumps in black and brown kid, suede, patent trim, also the newest thing in footwear—

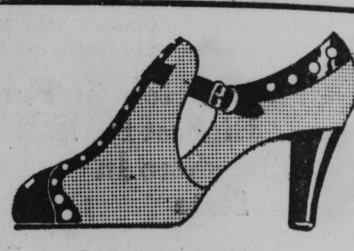
\$1.98



Ladies' Novelty Shoes

Fall shoes are here. Everything new. All suedes, combination suede, patent trim, in black and brown, also the newest creation in footwear in multi-colors, blue, grey, brown, black, rust, slate, all mixed into one shoe, priced at . . .

\$2.95



Men's New Oxfords

Men's new oxfords, black and brown in your favorite style, Cuban heel, V-8 toes, wing tip, priced at . . .

\$1.98

New Multi-colored oxfords, Pumps, Ties, Straps, \$1.98, \$2.95, \$3.95

Ladies Hose

Ladies' new hose, pure silk, full fashioned ringless, three thread. There are none in Henderson to equal them—

59¢ pair

2 pair for \$1.10



Ladies Hose

New Senior Class in all the newest fall shades, "Feather Sheer," ringless, pure silk, "A Dollar Value"—

79¢ pair

Men's Fall Hats

Men's fall hats in all colors, made of the finest felt. Medium and feather weights

\$2.95



Fall Hats

Men's new fall hats in leading colors, exceptionally fine felt. A real buy. Looks like many \$2.00 hats . . .

\$1.25

Men's Fine Felt Hats

Made in black, brown, blue gray, and many other leading colors. A hat you will be proud of . . .

\$1.95

Boys' Hats

Boys' fall hats in blue, brown, gray, made just in the style you will like for them to wear . . .

\$1.25

Men's New Fall Suits

In young men's and men's suits, sports and plain back in blue, black, oxfords and gray and exceptionally good values at—

\$9.95



Men's Suits

Here's a buy that cannot be equalled in Henderson. All wool, men's suits, sport or plain backs, single or double breasted in plaids, checks, stripes, just what every young man is wearing—

\$14.95

Suits! Suits!

Men's fall part wool suits. Sports backs in all fall colors, single or double breasted. A buy you cannot afford to pass by—

\$13.50

Fall Suits

Men's new fall suits. All wool. Sport back, plaids, stripes, in any color you could ask for. Do not buy before you see these suits at—

\$16.50

Men's Shirts

Men's fine broadcloth shirts, in white and colors. Fully shrunk. Valued up to \$1.50 . . .

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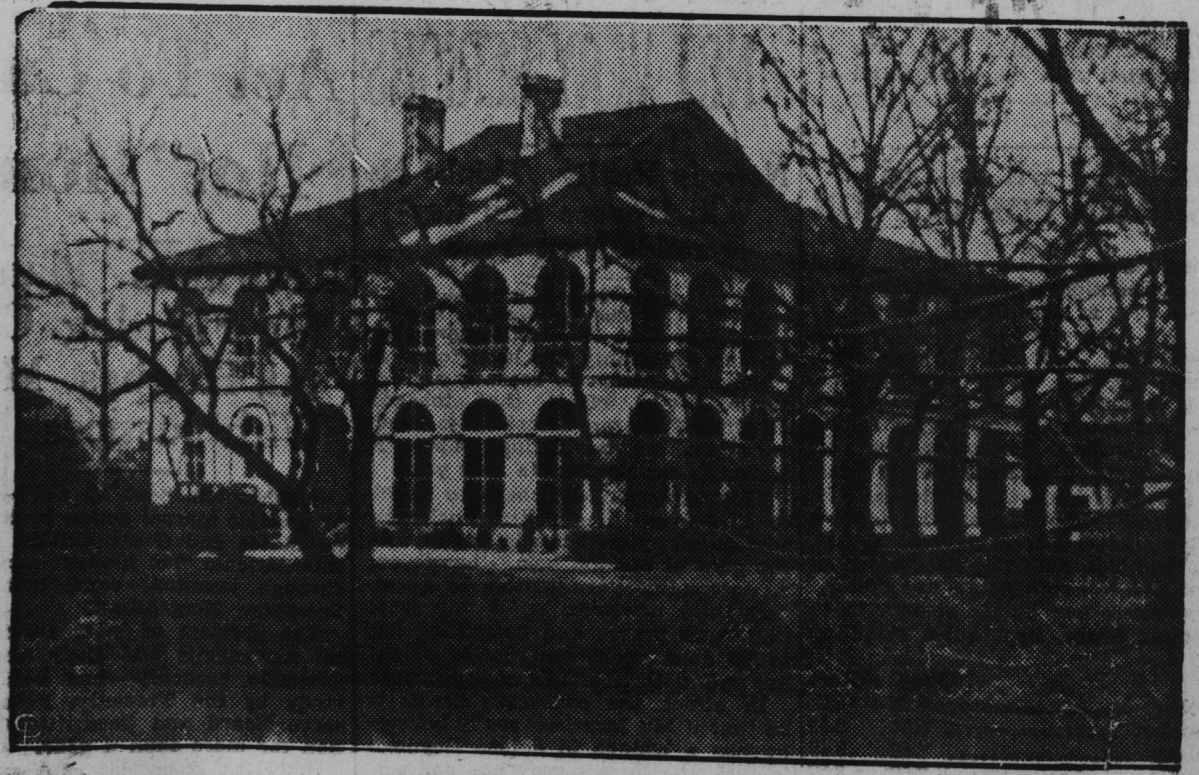
Men's Value Plus Oxfords

Men's leather sole dress oxfords, the finest shoe in Henderson for the money, any style, any size . . .

\$2.95

Efird's Dept. Store In Henderson

U. S. EMBASSY IN DANGER OF JAPANESE BOMBS



U. S. embassy in Nanking, China

U. S. embassy in Nanking, capital of China, was in danger as Japanese aerial bombers struck from the air to wipe out the city. The Japanese planned to make it the greatest air attack in history.