

THE BIRTHDAY MURDER

by LANGE LEWIS

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

LOOKING AT Bernice's pretty face as the red lips puffed out angry smoke, Victoria reflected dryly that the soft and sentimental women are apt to go very hard when practicality rears its ugly head. Bernice had discarded sentiment with regard to Stan in favor of a matter-of-fact approach to the situation, and now the actorlike quality of the man which had once so deeply fooled and enchanted her was seen stripped bare, and was far from enchanting.

Bernice stashed out her cigarette. She looked at Victoria with large brown eyes. "Why don't you phone Stan and talk with him?" she asked suddenly. "I mean, he knows you know all about everything. Remember that Richards boy I wanted to marry and that Mama hated so and how we'd go to movies and you'd let Mama think I'd gone with you?" Bernice's voice was bright, pressing this memory from the past to emphasize their long friendship, to coax Victoria into serving this present need.

"It's a ridiculous notion," said Victoria.

Bernice gave her a hard little glance. "Oh, all right, I'll do it myself, then."

Quite deliberately, Victoria listened to Bernice speaking in the little hallway. "Stan, this is Bernice. Stan, you MUST stop calling me. . . I mean it. . . We said goodbye. That's not true; you enjoy this sort of thing. Well, I don't. . . Are you doing it out of malice? I've explained the whole thing to you." (Long pause.) "You never cared for anyone but yourself, Stan, but I'm asking you to stop phoning my house. What? Oh, is that so? Is that so? How about what you call your house; it belongs to your mother unless I'm much mistaken. . . What? I'll be delighted to. I intended to do so anyhow, but it was such a trifling little gift that I felt it might seem insulting. A messenger will deliver it to you tomorrow."

Bernice returned shaken. "What a cheap little devil he is," she said, and sighed. She sat down wearily and her eyes misted with something like tears. "He wants his bracelet back; it seems it's really his mother's."

"That's practically symbolic. So is he."

Bernice's roving and abstracted eye fell on Victoria's sapphire ring. She shot forward toward Victoria, one arm propping her weight. With the other hand she pointed. Her black-gloved finger was long and thin. "Where did you get that?"

Victoria told her.

Bernice, who was holding Victoria's ring hand in her own, suddenly flung it aside like something she was casting away. "It's ridiculous," she said, contemptuously. "Why, he didn't make a quarter of

what you do! It's in very bad taste, considering that! VERY bad taste!"

"I thought it one of the kindest things anyone has ever done for me," said Victoria quietly.

Bernice flung her arms around Victoria, kissed the side of her face with lips that would leave, Victoria knew, a double red stain like a bite.

"I'm mean!" she cried. "I'm venomous and selfish! How could I have said such a thing! It was sweet of him! It was dear of him!"

In her new agitation Bernice stood up, pacing restlessly before the coffee table on her tiny high-heeled feet. "I'm a terrible woman, terrible!" she cried. Her black-gloved hands went to her face and covered it. She stood there, stylishly wide shoulders crouched in what seemed like shame, her face hidden in those cupped black hands. Muffled by the gloves came the whispered words: "When I think of what I let myself do because of that awful man. . ."

Suddenly she threw back her head, her face wary. "I'm not apologizing, Walter's no angel to live with. Walter has his little claws, sometimes."

Then a wry, bitter smile touched her lips and she looked old. "Isn't it funny, how it goes with us?" she asked in her little-girl voice. "Whenever I'm in luck, you're out of it; whenever you're lucky, something awful's happening to me. Like two sides of a balance. It's always been that way." She added, dreamily: "I haven't been lucky for such a long, long time. . ."

Twenty-four hours later, as Tuck put the anonymous note into his inner coat pocket, Froody said to him: "Oh, there's no doubt about it. And it was an easy little job at that. There was the watermark on the stationery. And the fact it had been cut off to get rid of a name or initials at the top. I made the rounds of the Hollywood stations. I went over the old order lists at the places carrying that brand of writing paper. At the fifth place I found her name on their list; she'd ordered two boxes six months ago."

"And the pen it was printed with?"

"The enlargements show one of the better pens—even ink flow, no scratching."

From the street below, traffic sounds wafted up. Tuck sat for a moment listening to them, and then went to the hatrack for his brown fedora.

"You going to talk to her?"

"Yes."

"Want me along?"

"No."

Froody looked wistful. "What I can't figure is why she did it. If she was out to get Mrs. Hime, she had her chance at the inquest, and she knocked herself out covering up for her. I don't get it." He brooded for a moment and Tuck put on his hat. "You're going to suffer now," quoted Froody. "That's queer."

That's—wrong, somehow."

Moira Hastings was not at home, so Tuck waited for her in his shabby black sedan, which looked even shabbier than usual in comparison to the suave opalescent convertible coupe parked just ahead of them. The mid-afternoon sunlight, which always seemed clearer and brighter in Hollywood than in Los Angeles, beamed down on the chateaulike white building where Moira Hastings lived. A woman in slacks above which showed a brown diaphragm stared insolently at his car, went lightly up the steps of the apartment building. In half an hour Moira Hastings drove past without seeing him, and parked two spaces ahead up the sloping street. He was waiting for her at the door when she came up the steps, her key in her hand. Above a tailored beige jacket her amber hair shone brightly. Her hard, light eyes flashed a hint of fear, and then she half-dropped her lashes and looked very noncommittal.

"I want to talk to you," he said. He took her elbow, turned her around, led her to his car. She balked. Then she relaxed and got in.

"What do you want to talk about?" she asked, when he had tucked his bulk in under the steering wheel.

"The anonymous note you sent to Mrs. Hime."

She held her breath for a moment. "I don't know what you mean."

Tuck sighed, and turned on the ignition. He pressed his foot on the starter and the motor whirred.

Her voice was thin. "Where are you taking me?"

"To the city jail."

Her body went rigid, and the brown purse on her lap slid to the floor with a muffled thud. Tuck dropped one long arm and retrieved it, but instead of returning it he opened it and felt among the contents. She tried to snatch it from him, but he twisted his body and fended off her hands with one elbow. He took out her fountain pen and put it into his inner pocket. Politely, he laid the purse on Moira Hastings' lap.

"You can't do that!" she said.

"I've done it. The paper has been traced to you through the stationer name and address. Printing from this pen, enlarged, will match the printing of that note. I don't think it wise of you to continue to deny that you wrote and sent that note, but that's your business."

He slipped into low gear, stepped on the gas; the car moved forward.

"Wait!" Her fingers clamped tight on his forearm.

He had been so sure of what she would do that he had really taken his foot from the gas before she spoke. The car coughed and settled back into immobility. There was a silence.

(To Be Continued)

Nerve Disorder in Diabetes

By HERMAN N. BUNDESEN, M. D.

CERTAIN diseases, when they occur and are not kept under control, may produce permanent damage in various parts of the body. This is the case with diabetes, a condition due to lack of secretion known as insulin, from the pancreas. Insulin is needed so that the body can use sugars.

If diabetes goes untreated, a disturbance of the nervous system may develop known as diabetic neuropathy. If this damage to the nervous system is recognized early, the condition may be completely relieved by bringing the diabetes under control.

Doctor R. Wayne Rundles of the University of Michigan has studied 125 patients with diabetic neuropathy. He finds that the first evidence of such nervous system damage is an absence of certain of the nervous reflexes, particularly the knee jerk.

It can be found whether this reflex is present by tapping the patient on the knee, and seeing if the leg kicks forward. In addition to these disturbances of the reflexes there may also be severe

constipation, chronic diarrhea, no appetite, nausea.

In about one-fourth of the patients, there was trouble with the sphincter muscles controlling the bowel and bladder, and impotency developed in over one-fourth of the men. Patients with diabetic neuropathy also often develop swelling of the legs and have night sweats. They may be unable to stand hot or cold temperatures very well. They may have low blood pressure with fainting attacks when they assume an erect position, especially in the morning after arising, or after exertion.

In treating diabetic neuropathy, the most important thing is to bring the diabetes under control. This requires the use of the proper diet, and the giving of insulin. In addition, the use of salicylates for relieving pain, cool baths, and ice packs, will often help.

If control of the diabetes is maintained for a reasonable period of time, mild cases of the neuropathy will recover in a few weeks, the moderately severe ones in six to twelve months, and the severe cases in one to two years.

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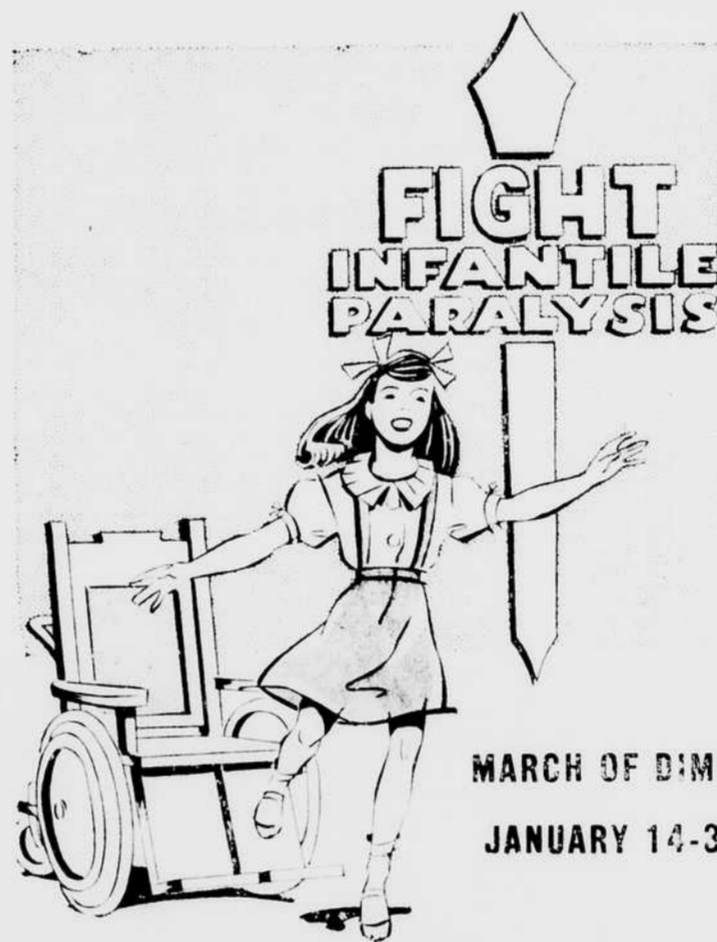
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Join The March Of Dimes

FIGHT INFANTILE PARALYSIS



Until infantile paralysis smites someone dear to you, you cannot realize how tragic it is. May you never know — but help those whom it has already claimed.

MARCH OF DIMES
JANUARY 14-31

The Strongest Argument

We, who have seen the terrible consequences of infantile paralysis among the children of America, are only too conscious of the need for contributing to the annual March of Dimes, January 14-31.

Those familiar and distressing sights—the shrunken limbs, the twisted bodies, the awkward locomotion, the crutches, wheelchairs and all the other reminders of this terrible scourge—are in themselves the strongest argument for supporting the work of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis.

Every cent contributed to this organization works for victims of infantile paralysis. It is used for care and treatment, for research into the cause and prevention of the disease, for emergency aid in epidemic areas, and for training doctors, nurses and physical therapists in modern techniques.

It is the determination of the National Foundation, founded by Franklin D. Roosevelt, that infantile paralysis shall be conquered. The people of America share in that determination, and through contributions to the March of Dimes they take an active part in the unrelenting fight against the Great Crippler.

The Fifth Freedom

Every good American cherishes the Four Freedoms contained in the now-famous Atlantic Charter: Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want, Freedom from Fear.

There is another freedom for which all humanity is fighting: Freedom from Disease.

One of the most feared and most insidious diseases that annually threatens this nation is infantile paralysis. It is high on the list of Public Enemies because its victims are chiefly children under 16.

Infantile paralysis—the Great Crippler—is no respecter of persons. It strikes rich and poor alike, white and black, Catholic, Protestant and Jew.

Through contributions to the March of Dimes, conducted January 14-31 by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, you can help bring the Fifth Freedom closer.

GIVE GENEROUSLY— GIVE TODAY!

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PACK STREET IN MEAT PACKER STRIKE RALLY



JAMMED IN FRONT of one of New York's big meat-packing houses, hundreds of striking packers are addressed by Meyer Stern, CIO district leader, as the nation-wide walkout of some 325,000 workers threatened to tie up the nation's meat supply. In Kansas City and Chicago, the nation's biggest packing centers, huge picket lines were reported thrown around plants with thousands marching and police standing by. (International)

ARCHITECT'S PLAN FOR WHITE HOUSE EXTENSION



HERE IS A DRAWING by Architect Lorenzo S. Winslow showing the proposed extension (right) to the White House which will add 15,000 feet of new office floor space to accommodate executive assistants to the President. A \$1,650,000 appropriation by Congress will also provide for an auditorium with facilities for formal ceremonies, radio broadcasts, television, and movies. (International Soundphoto)