

THE DESERT MOON MYSTERY

When Miss MacDonald came up, bringing me some dinner, which I couldn't touch, I said to her: "It seems true, but I know that it can't be. It is too impossible. I mean—too far fetched."

"Not a bit of it," she said. "The only impossible thing about it is the length of time it has taken us to discover it. Of course—forgive me, Mrs. Magin. I was almost on the trail once, I had at least started in the right direction, and then you threw me completely off."

"I! How?" she asked. "By seeing something which you did not see. But you are not in the least to blame for that. The fault is all mine."

She went and shut my transom. She looked through my clothes closet. She looked under my bed, saying as she did so, "The proverbial practice of old maids, you know." She came and sat close beside me, "Now then . . . she said."

"Listen. Bit by bit it works into the whole, like a picture puzzle—each segment slipping right into place. There is just one hole in it all, and I think your Danny's kindness and unselfishness will supply that necessary bit."

She began then—to use her own way of saying it—to put together the pieces of the puzzle. She was right. Bit by bit she fitted together. Almost at once she came to the place that she had called a hole.

"There is no hole there," I told her. "Under those circumstances, Danny would have been just sweet and unselfish, and foolish enough to have done that very thing. She did it. That was why she was worried and unhappy. all that day."

"I'm sure of it. Now then . . ." She went on: Danny's calling after Gaby that day—easy to understand now, of course, and leading straight to Chad's suicide and confessional note. Gaby's fear; Martha's murder; Sam's ashes on the bag; Gaby's note to Danny; each one fitting right into place, until spread in front of me was one of the most hideous pictures that any human being has ever been forced to look at. In all my experience I have never investigated another murder case where the thing was so cruelly, vilely premeditated; so wickedly, cunningly carried out. If this is true, it will be also, the first time that I have ever found a really brilliant mind belonging to a fiend."

"If it is true!" I echoed. "But it is proven. You have just proven it all to me."

She shook her head. "We have a seemingly perfect fabric made up, wholly, of circumstantial evidence. As yet, we have nothing else. Now I have a question to ask you that I should have asked you this at least a week ago. I did not, because I was certain that, unless I shared all of my suspicions with you, your answer would be exactly the answer that you gave me before. Now, thinking as you think, I want a very careful answer to this question."

When she had asked it, I refused my first impulse to answer it, at once, and sat thinking carefully for several minutes. The answer that I was forced to give, then, made me sick with shame.

"No," I said, "I didn't. I thought honestly that I did. But now I know that I didn't. That—that," I knew I was chattering it, "puts Cannizzano's murder right at my door—"

"Nonsense," she folded one of my trembling hands into her steady, capable hands. "We can't go poking about like that, into the machinery of fate, and stay sane. The blame in this case is entirely for me. But, if I had not allowed myself to be misled then, but had worked straight on, something equally tragic might have happened. We don't know. What we do know is, that no more time must be wasted."

"I have spent this past week in trying to obtain the necessary proof. I have failed. Now, I am going to ask you to help me. Will you?"

"I will, and gladly. But you'll have to tell me what you want me to do. I haven't the faintest idea."

She told me.

"I could see that she was annoyed. "That's easy."

"I haven't found it so," she said. "I have made three attempts, as many as I dare make, this week, and have failed. Do you realize that it must come simply, and naturally? You must realize that—"

"See here," I interrupted, "why not do as Sam wants you to do? Why not arrest the criminal now, and force the proof, afterward? This sort of evidence could be got-

Volstead Declares It Works



After he had called on President Hoover at a pre-New Year conference, Andrew J. Volstead, father of the Volstead Law, was interviewed by newspapermen as he emerged from the White House. He told them he was satisfied with the way the law is working. Volstead is shown in the center.

ten then, as well as now, and a lot safer, too, it seems to me."

"Mrs. Magin," she said, "until we have evidence of guilt we have no criminal to arrest. Incredible as it seems, we might still be wrong concerning every bit of this. I once made a horrible mistake. It was on my third care—that is, after I began to work for myself. I don't talk about it. I can't think about it. But I made myself a promise then, a promise that I have never broken, and which I never will break. Except in extreme necessity, proof, positive, and perfect, must come before any accusation or arrest in a case of mine. Twice, as I have said, I have had men arrested because of circumstantial evidence. Each time the evidence was far stronger than anything we have in this case. The first time, the man would have undoubtedly escaped if he had not been put in confinement. The second time was on my third case, which I have mentioned. If you force me to make this the third time—"

"I can't force you to do anything," I reminded her, hoping to cool her down a bit.

"Yes, you can. If you go at this so clumsily that you give the thing away, and so endanger your own life, I shall have to force matters. I must, of course, risk a reputation—I'm not speaking of my own, you understand—in preference to risking a life—again I am not speaking of my own. But, if we are wrong in

this, and remember we may be—circumstantial evidence is the trickiest thing in the world—it would be bitterly cruel and wrong. Will you remember that, when you make your first attempt?"

"But—how shall I do it?"

"I am going to leave that to you, and to your natural wit. You can do it much more spontaneously if you are not attempting to follow set directions. But do, do be careful. Don't make a mistake."

With that she left me. I am ashamed to say that excitement had made me forget my sorrow. I sat there saying my prayers, planning, and shaking in my shoes, for a good half hour before I could get up enough courage to go downstairs. In all probability, the next hour would bring me face to face with the murderous fiend; and not by the blink of an eye, not by the ghost of a shiver, must I betray my horrible knowledge.

When I finally did get myself downstairs, I found Sam, seemingly alone in the living room, playing solitaire. I judged, from the look he gave me, and from the way he had his shoulders hunched, that he was still in a right ugly humor.

"Where's everybody?" I asked. "Out committing murders, somewhere, likely. Do you know how much I trust that MacDonald woman?"

"No, I don't know. I don't care, either."

"Ahk!" Sam barked. "She is head-

over heels in love with John, that's a part of what is the matter with her."

"I said, 'I wish I thought so.'"

"Why do you wish that, Mary?" It was Danny's voice. Her white face, with the big, sorrowful eyes, peered around the high back of a chair near the fireplace.

I was too taken aback to answer her.

"How long have you been sitting there, eavesdropping, young lady?" Sam asked.

"I didn't mean to eavesdrop," she answered, quietly. "I am sorry. I was reading."

Sam, with his usual helpfulness in embarrassing situations, pushed back his chair and went walking fast out of the room.

"Mary," Danny questioned, "why aren't you my friend any more?"

"Lands, child," I said, "if you mean that because I was wishing Miss MacDonald was in love with John, it was only because I've always reckoned that the more women in love with a man the better for him. John loves you. What do you care how many women love him?"

"John doesn't love me any more."

"Nothing like that," I scoffed, and went into the kitchen.

She followed me. I went straight to the stove and picked up the lid lifter, which, as usual, when I'm not there to watch, some one had left sticking up in a stove lid to get red hot, instead of hanging it on the hook where it belonged. I dropped it with a howl; and, wrapping my hand in my apron, told her to run and get the linseed oil and lime-water, up in the hall bathroom, for me.

I am not saying that I was not to blame. I do say that, if that fool child Zinnia had not jumped around shouting, "Sody! Sody! Wet sody's the best for burns—" and that, if Mrs. Ricker hadn't heard her screeching, and come in, too, and began asking questions, I certainly would not have overlooked the fact that, before she went to minister to my needs, Danny had picked up that lid lifter, from where I had dropped it on the floor, and, barehanded, had hung it upon its hook.

She made a quick trip upstairs and down again, with the bandages, and the lotion. She offered, sweet and sympathetic, to do up my hand for me. I had noticed, by that time, that my hand was not smarting much, but I was too excited to account for it reasonably. I asked Mrs. Ricker to attend to the bandages. I had another job for Danny. "I just came out here," I said, "to

make my weekly list to send to Telko for supplies. I can't write with this wadded up hand. Will you make the list for me, Danny? Zinnia, please hand her the pad and pencil from the shelf."

Zinnia brought it. Danny sat down by the table and picked up the pencil. My heart thumped in my throat.

"On a crate of Fallon melons," I said.

Danny pushed the pad and pencil across the table to Mrs. Ricker. "Perhaps you'd as soon make the list for Mary? I have something to attend to upstairs."

"Go on, now you've started it, Danny," I said. "You write such a neat, pretty hand."

"I presume my writing can be read," Mrs. Ricker replied, as she picked up the pencil. "A crate of Fallon melons, did you say?" She wrote it down. I heard Danny running up the back stairway.

I felt flat as rolled dough from my disappointment. In the next minute I had something more than disappointment to bother me.

"I don't see," Zinnia said, "how you raved out to burn yourself on that stove, Mrs. Magin. Miss Canne-

ziano was out here, just a while ago, wanting to make some tea. The fire was dead out. She boiled the water on the electric plate."

I ran to the stove. It was as cold as winter time.

(To be continued)

Cooperative poultry sales are beginning over North Carolina. Farmers of Pitt county recently sold 7,062 pounds at the poultry car for \$1,457.41.

The Farmers' Exchange in Cumberland county is saving buyers \$3 a ton on their purchases of fertilizer this Spring.

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Full Rows

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Bait for Boll Weevil
The Department of Agriculture thinks the boll weevil smells her way to the cotton field—and therefore it is planning ways to trick her. "The odoriferous principle of the cotton plant has been studied," says the Secretary of Agriculture. "This principle has been isolated, and the compound can probably be



made synthetically. Here is a possible means of furnishing bait for boll weevils which may have considerable importance." Sounds like a joke, but it is far from being that. Maybe two or three years from now we'll be spreading empty V-O sacks on frames, with a little of this "principle" in the bottom, and when a sack gets full of weevils all we'll have to do will be to haul it away and get rid of them.

"Have sold V-O for 30 years, and have used V-O on our own crops, with excellent results. V-O's quality and other merits are proved—our customers always come back for more."—The P. B. Halligan Co., Dealer, Carson, Va.

Millions from a Weed!
In all countries where tobacco is produced on any considerable scale, it "provides an important source of state revenues," says Encyclopaedia Britannica—which is another way of



saying it pays a lot of taxes. Think of the billions of dollars' worth of public works that have been paid for with taxes on the descendants of the plant that even the Indians first thought was a weed!

"Have just closed our 14th season selling V-O. We have always guaranteed every bag of V-O and have not had one dissatisfied customer."—Seed & Fertilizer Co., Christiansburg, Va.

The Consumer Pays It All
The United States is one country that does not tax or control the growing of tobacco. But after the leaf is marketed, what a harvest it gathers! Internal revenue taxes for manufacturing, license taxes for selling—and finally the consumer refunds everything everybody else has paid up to that minute.

"Change is inevitable in a progressive country. Change is constant."—DISRAELI, at Edinburgh, 1807.

Seeding from the Air
A tract of 1,000 acres in Oregon was seeded from an airplane traveling 70 miles an hour, 500 feet above ground, says an exchange. A fine stand of grass was obtained and the cost was about one-third that of hand seeding.

Cotton, Oldest of Crops
"Cotton is one of the oldest of all cultivated plants, and is the most valuable fiber plant in the world. It was grown in China three thousand years before Christ. Europeans did not know of the plant until a few centuries ago. It was first cultivated in the United States by the early settlers in Virginia."—William S. Myers.

"I furnish what my trade specifies—V-O."—W. D. JOYNER, Dealer, Rocky Mount, N. C.

Close Spacing, High Yield
"Probably the most valuable lesson that the cotton contest has taught is the effect of close spacing on yield," writes A. B. Bryan in Manufacturers Record, describing results of the Clemson College 5-Acre contest which recently completed its fourth year.

"Clearly and positively, close spacing of row and in drill increase the yield per acre." The best width of row is 35 to 37 inches, he continues.

A decrease throughout South Carolina to this width of row would add about \$16,000,000 to the value of the state's crop, at 18 cents a pound, he says.

And by actual count of stalks it has been found that the highest yields are made with an average of about three stalks per foot of row.

Heavy Fertilizing Pays
Tests in growing bright tobacco, made by the Virginia experiment station through a period of nine successive years, show clearly that heavy applications of fertilizer pay better than light applications. The record of the tests shows that 1,400 pounds of 3-8-3 per acre brought an average yield of 1,038 pounds that sold for an average of \$188 per acre—whereas only 700 pounds per acre, of the same analysis, brought a yield of 648 pounds that sold for \$91 per acre. The difference in favor of heavy applications was 320 pounds or \$95 per acre.

"V-O goods are OK—none better."—E. S. HYDER & Son, Dealer, Stony Point, Tenn.

The Way Is Open
"Most American mills require cotton better than the average of the grades and staples produced in the United States. Growers have therefore an opportunity to increase their income by producing cotton of higher spinning value. The strongest demand is for middling to strict middling cotton from 1 1/8 to 1 1/4 inch in length of staple. Foreign competition in the production of these lengths is practically non-existent. Clearly the American cotton industry has here an opportunity which ought not to be neglected."—W. M. Jardine, former Secretary of Agriculture.