

THE DESERT MOON MYSTERY

CHAPTER XVII The End

I suppose it takes more than a minute for one's wits, particularly if they happen to be thick wits, to drain entirely away.

Before mine had completely left me, I had attempted to telephone to Sam, down in the outfit's quarters, and had failed to get a reply to my call. I had told Mrs. Ricker and Zinnia, trying with all my might to hide my fear, to run out and find Sam, or Miss MacDonald, or Hubert Hand, or John—I had forgotten that John was upstairs in his room—and to bring one or all of them to the house as quickly as possible. To this day I don't know why they went, running. It was the slam of the screen door behind them, I think, bringing with it as it did the realization of my aloneness and the memory of Miss MacDonald's warning, that turned me clear over to terror.

I shall not describe what I did, nor what I thought, during the time that I was alone there, downstairs, before help arrived. The humorously inclined might think such a description amusing. To me there is nothing amusing in the spectacle of an old woman being gripped and wrung by fright. I longed to run from the house; but I felt that I must stay there to explain the situation to the others when they came, if they ever did come, and to do my poor best, since I had made the fatal mistake, to prevent catastrophe. By clock time, it was only thirty-six silent minutes that I had to wait before Miss MacDonald came, alone and unharmed, up the front steps and into the living room.

Still holding Sam's thirty-three rifle in my hand—I had known that I could never use it to shoot at any living thing, but I had hoped that it might make me look dangerous—I turned to meet her.

"Don't point that thing at me," she commanded. "Put it down. What are you doing with it? What is the trouble here?"

Before I could answer her, Sam, Mrs. Ricker and Zinnia came clattering through the kitchen.

Mrs. Ricker was wringing her hands and saying over and over, in a voice all broken and mutilated with horror, "I have gone insane, I have gone insane. I have gone insane."

Sam said, "Gabrielle Canneziano just now waved at us from her window."

Miss MacDonald turned and ran like a wild thing up the stairs. Just as she disappeared from our sight the sound of a pistol's shot cracked through the place.

I followed the others. I ran up the steps. I stumbled down the hall, behind them, and into Gabrielle Canneziano's room.

I saw Gabrielle Canneziano, her cheeks painted, her lips reddened, long earrings dangling from her ears, lying on the couch. Over her breast was a widening spot of color, staining the fringes of the soft white silk dressing gown that she was wearing. On the floor was a smoking revolver.

John came. He said, "She told me what she was going to do. I allowed her to do it. I did not want Nevada to have to execute a woman."

EPILOGUE

Sam says, bitterly, that the only thing I need to explain is the one thing that can ever be explained: how one girl, by changing her clothes and by washing her face, could turn a houseful of supposedly sensible people into a packet of blithering, bat-blind fools for a generous period of time. I can explain that, I think; but I am going to leave it until later, and go clear back to the second of July, the day that Gabrielle received the code letter.

In her talk with John (John says

it was in no sense a confession, that it was nothing but a taunt for us all, a final, regretless, high fling of defiance) there in his room, during the twenty minutes or so that she talked to him, before she shot herself, some things, which might still not be clear to us, were made plain. Also, many of Miss MacDonald's previously formed opinions were directly or indirectly verified. Miss MacDonald had said, you remember, that the murder had been wickedly premeditated.

"When I read that letter," Gabrielle said to John, "and found myself penniless and plainless on a Nevada ranch, I at once made up my mind to kill Danielle, the little fool, and take her place."

How she persuaded Danny to accept the idea of the masquerade, and to change clothes with her, on the fourth of July, we do not positively know. That is the "hole" that Miss MacDonald mentioned in her puzzle. To my mind, there is little doubt that she gained her way easily, by using her own unhappiness and disappointment as tools with which to remove Danny's scruples and prod her pity. I am sure, remembering Danny's troubled manner at the time, that she consented unwillingly, that she thoroughly disliked the idea, and that she was afraid of its consequences.

When the two girls went upstairs together, on the afternoon of the fourth of July, they must have gone to effect the transformation. Perhaps, then, for a brief minute or two, the thing did seem amusing to Danny; for I know that I heard the girls laughing together, as I have mentioned, when I was on my errand upstairs.

We do not know, when the disguise had been completed, by what pretext Gabrielle lured Danny into the attic. Their trunks were in the attic. There could be a dozen simple reasons why Danny might consent to go up there with her. Coming downstairs again Gabrielle caught her by the throat and strangled her, instantly, by means of the deadly jiu-jitsu hold, which she had learned from her "Strangler. It is a hold that requires little strength—though Gabrielle's trained fingers were strong enough—but much scientific skill.

She took the earrings from Danny's ears—or, perhaps, Danny had not yet put them on—went to her own room, arranged her make-up, got into the wrap, which completely covered Danny's clothes that she was wearing, pulled the hat down over her eyes to conceal the change in hairdressing, and walked through the living room, for us all to see her, at four o'clock.

When Chad went to the porch with her (this John found out by insistent questioning) she told him that Danny had left the house, earlier, by the back way. That she and Danny had arranged a joke on the rest of us, to enliven the dull afternoon, and asked him to help with it by calling, in Danny's voice to her, when he came back into the house. Chad did it. That was why, since he was standing down by the front doors, the voice supposed to come from the upper hall had a strained and an unnatural sound. Gabrielle had reckoned that Chad, in spite of her request, would be too

stupid to discover the facts. Probably she thought that, at any rate, she would be able to impose silence upon him. It was one of her many mistakes. We think that he must have known for the remainder of that afternoon that Gabrielle was masquerading as Danny. His happy mood was caused by the fact that Gabrielle had given him a confidence and had allowed him to perform a small service for her. When he saw what had happened, and when he realized that the girl whom he had worshipped was a murderer, he killed himself. Strange, that in spite of everything, he still loved her enough to leave the confessional note to shield her. The men think that he left the note to shield the rest of us, rather than to shield her. I do not believe it.

She had planned to go straight around the house and re-enter it through the back door. Martha's being by the rabbit hutch was something she had not counted on. It was necessary to distract Martha's attention, and to get her to come at once into the house. She gave her the monkey bracelet. As she did so, probably because of the act of kindness, Martha made one of her frequent mistakes and called Gabrielle "Danny." Gabrielle told John (concerning Martha, John also questioned her insistently) that she then showed Martha the poison in the charm, and told her that it was a love potion that would make Chad love her, "like a lady," if she would swallow it, and never tell anyone anything about it.

Martha out of the way, Gaby must have run quickly around to the back of the house and up the back stairway. To toss the hat and wrap on the body, replace the earrings, scatter the pipe ashes over the beaded bag (I declare to goodness, I can more easily think of her lying there in her white silk dressing gown, than I can think of her brushing those pipe ashes up, from somewhere, in order to save them for that purpose), and drop the tating shuttle there, required not more than one or two minutes of time.

Another two or three minutes to wash her face thoroughly and to douse on some of Danny's perfume, and she was coming downstairs again, with the headache that necessitated the drawing of the curtains—to make her safety a bit safer, just at first.

She told John that those few minutes when she had to walk through the room, make the trip around the house, and get upstairs again, were the only moments of fright that she had had, from the first to the last. Danny, she said, she knew that she had nothing to fear.

I think, however, that there were

other times when she was afraid. I am certain that real fear was there in her room, that day, when the engagement ring dropped from her finger. Though I believe that her fear, then, was caused wholly from superstition, and not from any dread that the slight difference between her hands and Danny's hands might be noticed.

I am sure that her fear for John, on the fourth of July, was real enough. She knew that each minute he was away, longer than the time necessary for the trip, was a minute lost from the perfect alibi she had so mistakenly tried to arrange for him by sending him away from the ranch. She had not known that Danny's fingers had closed on the stair's tread. When John came in the back way she was afraid that it would be remembered later—as it was—and that some one would suspect—as Hubert Hand did suspect—that John had carried the body in at that time.

She had counted on her note to Danny, and on the fact that, as Danny, she was downstairs within ten or twelve minutes after the time we had seen Gaby walking down the path and had heard Danny's voice calling after her, to prove her own innocence. They, and the gentleness of Danny's disposition, did this to perfection.

Her original plan had been to prove that Sam was the murderer. With Sam out of the way, and with John in possession of his fortune, she had thought, I suppose, that she would have no trouble in persuading John to leave the Desert Moon. But she was afraid of the idea. Knowing John's devotion to Sam, she could not reckon, with any sureness, how disgrace and sorrow might affect John. It was too big a risk to take, unreservedly. So, though she picked the quarrel with Sam, strewed the pipe ashes on the bag, put the key in the fireplace, wrote on the photograph, she left loopholes in the shapes of the many other false clues. It is only my own notion that, if she had not thought the definite accusation of Sam, of which she made during the session on the fifth of July, was necessary to protect John, she would have backed out, by that time, and not have made it.

It is again only my notion that the request, which she put in her note to Danny, to have Danny take

her body to San Francisco for cremation, was made because she thought that it would be desirable for her to be able to leave the ranch at once—perhaps for several weeks. Mrs. Ricker's expressed suspicion probably made her realize the wisdom of returning as rapidly as possible to the Desert Moon. (To be Concluded)

Small Incomes Are Predicted For 1930

Smaller incomes even than in 1929 are in store for the farmers of North Carolina in 1930, Dr. G. W. Forster, head of the department of agricultural economics at North Carolina State College, cautions in an article on the farm outlook for 1930, appearing in North Carolina Farm Business, a publication of the State College Extension Service.

Big carryovers from last year in cotton, tobacco and peanuts make acreage reduction in tobacco and peanuts and no further increase in cotton acreage necessary this season, says Dr. Forster.

Indications point to fair conditions for early Irish potatoes but for a very heavy yield and small prices for potatoes in general.

Only for the production of hogs and strawberries do the conditions seem more than normally favorable.

"If the acreage changes suggested by this outlook report are adopted," declared Dr. Forster, "a curtailment in the acreage of cotton, tobacco, potatoes and peanuts will result. On land thus released, additional hay, pasture and feed-

666 Tablets

Relieves a Headache or Neuralgia in 30 minutes, checks a Cold the first day, and checks Malaria in three days.

666 also in Liquid

On Fifth Avenue

Many of the fairest owe their beauty to FRIEDRICH'S LEMON CLEANSING CREAM

Nature's way to beauty For sale by M. R. BURROUGHS Warrenton, N. C.

Best Purgative for Colds



Relieves the congestion, reduces complications, hastens recovery.

A new Octagon Premium

... only 100 coupons

(See below)



THERE are six glasses and pitcher all of the same exquisite design. The glass is blown glass, very thin, very clear, of the fashionable pink color. The whole set is unusually graceful in shape. All you have to do to get this lovely water set is to ask your grocer for "Octagon" every time you buy laundry soap, soap powder, scouring cleanser, toilet soap for the wash basin, floating soap for the bath, and chips for your washer. Then save the coupons you get. You need 100 coupons to get this premium, at least 10 of which must be from Octagon Soap Powder.

To get this premium, you must have at least 10 Coupons from Octagon Soap Powder. The other 90 can be from any of the Octagon Soap Products shown below.



Present Coupons to agent below on or before July 31, 1930 THE HOME FURNITURE & SUPPLY COMPANY Cash or Credit "Everything for the Home" Warrenton, N. C.

grains may be grown. Such feed can then be utilized by hogs, poultry and dairy cows that will more nearly supply the demand in the farm home and the nearby locality.

"Two important benefits would result: first, a better balanced diet would be available for the farm family; and second, more satisfactory prices would probably be received.

"The 1930 outlook may appear a gloomy one, but to North Carolinians who are working for greater prosperity and better times for our farm population, it may be advantageous."

Dr. Forster praises Governor Gardner's "Live At Home" program and advocates a "farm plan" that will furnish more of the household and animal feed requirements.

Renew your subscription.

Chatham County farmers order 10,000 pounds of seed for planting this spring. Farmers saved their own seed fall and will sow these on grain.

DR. THOS. A. SHEAN

OPTOMETRIST Office over Bank of Warrenton, N. C.

James D. Randolph Motion Picture Photographer Free Lance News Reel and Commercial Telephone 1916 Warren Plains, N. C.

Protection

The day by day work of a life time, given to building a business, may be swept away in hours time by a fire. Good will is the only thing that can't burn, but your good will will not profit you very much if you are not in a position to carry on. That's where insurance comes in.

Be Prepared

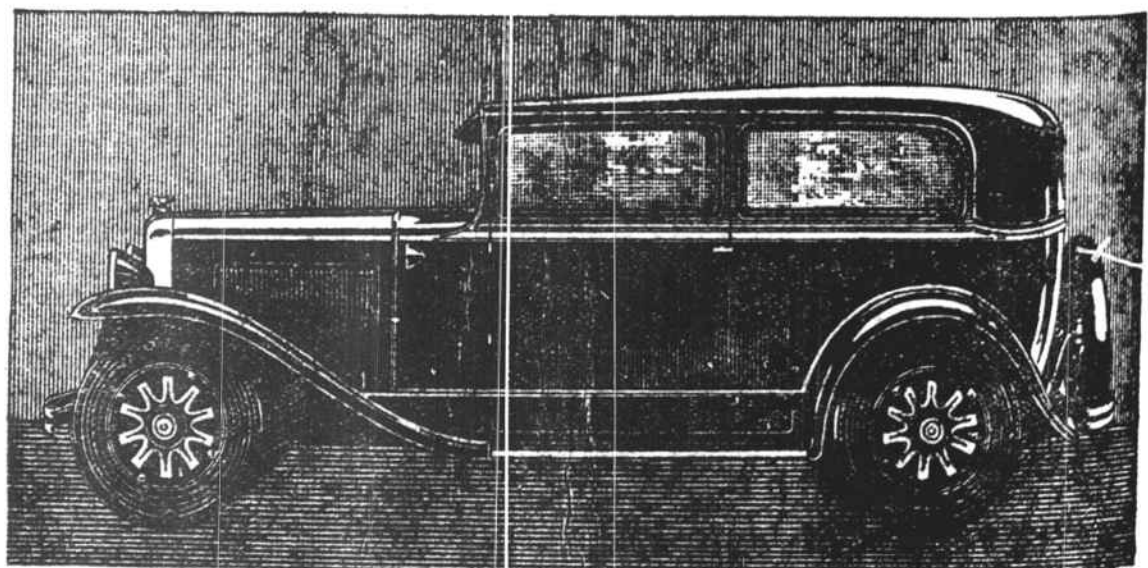
CITIZENS INSURANCE & BONDING CO.

R. T. WATSON, President PAUL B. BELL, Manager Warrenton, N. C. FIRE — LIFE — LIABILITY — BONDING "Consult your Insurance Agent as you would your Doctor or Lawyer."



A FAMOUS NAME A FINER CAR

means that Pontiac value has been increased...



The 2-Door Sedan Body by Fisher

THE New Series Pontiac Big Six is called "a finer car with a famous name."

This means that the intrinsic value for which Pontiac has always been famous reaches new heights in the New Series Six. It means that new-type rubber engine supports make Pontiac's big, 60-horsepower engine smoother than ever. It means that a new steering mechanism, acting on roller bearings, gives Pontiac still greater ease of control. Its big, improved, internal, non-squeak four-wheel brakes are now safer and more dependable than ever. There is smart new styling in its bodies by Fisher. It has a new sloping windshield that lessens headlight glare. And improved Lovejoy Hydraulic Shock Absorbers, at no extra cost, give big car riding ease.

If you are in the market for a low-priced six that combines fine performance and attractive style with assurance of enduring satisfaction—do not fail to see the New Series Pontiac Big Six—a finer car with a famous name!

Prices, \$745 and up, f. o. b. Pontiac, Mich., plus delivery charges. Shock absorbers standard equipment. Bumpers and spring covers at slight extra cost. General Motors Time Payment Plan available at minimum rate.

Consider the delivered price as well as the list (f. o. b.) price when comparing automobiles. Oakland-Pontiac delivered prices include only authorized charges for freight and delivery and the charge for any additional accessories or financing desired.

THE NEW SERIES PONTIAC BIG SIX \$745 UP

MOTOR SALES COMPANY Warrenton, N. C. Henderson, N. C.



To Frugal People Of Warren County

Remember, in case of death, the bank pays you what you have saved and the insurance company what you meant to save.

Claude M. Haithcock

"Your Pilot To Better Protection" Macon, N. C. Special Agent Pilot Life Insurance Co.