

Quality has no substitute



Tea "fresh from the gardens"

THE TULE MARSH MURDER

STORY OF A MISSING ACTRESS AND THE TAXING OF
WITS TO EXPLAIN HER FATE.

BY NANCY BARR MAVITY.

SYNOPSIS

Don Ellsworth's wife, the former actress Sheila O'Shay, disappears. Dr. Cavanaugh, criminal psychologist, learns that their married life has been very unhappy. Peter Piper, a Herald reporter while trying to see Dr. Cavanaugh, meets Barbara Cavanaugh, and finds she was engaged to Don Ellsworth before his marriage. An unidentified body found in the tule marsh is identified as the body of Sheila O'Shay. Barbara faints when she hears this. Mrs. Kane, Sheila's maid, is arrested and admits that her mistress forced Ellsworth to marry her by threatening a breach of promise. Peter and Dr. Cavanaugh find that the breach of promise papers have been taken from Sheila's safe, but discover a threatening letter signed "David Orme." Peter finds Orme at a tourist camp.

CHAPTER XXXI.—(Cont'd.)

Forgetting caution, Peter's gaze shifted, startled, from the man's hand to his face. It was a surprising voice to come from a ragged fugitive, hiding under an alias, with murder in the background. It was low, vibrant, modulated, giving to the simplest words a hint of music.

Peter knew with instant absolute assurance that a man with a voice like that might commit murder, but he would never stab an unarmed man with a dirty knife. He slid into a seat on the bench beside Orme and leaned his elbow on the table.

"It would be," he smiled companionably. "It's a funny thing about people who change their names always keeping the same initials. In fact, the tendency is so familiar that I should think by this time everyone would take pains to avoid it. By the way, why didn't you clear out?"

"I didn't have the money," the man said simply.

Peter groaned. There surged over him an irrational impulse to protect this man from the trap which he himself had laid, and into which the victim had stepped with such blind, unhesitating promptness. It was too easy!

"You ought to have a guardian!" he exclaimed almost angrily; and then, almost gently, "It's a good thing I found you."

Suppose this babe had been pounc-

ed upon by men from the homicide squad, with their "sweating" methods and "strong-arm" tactics—it would be like seeing a rabbit torn piecemeal by dogs. Peter quite forgot that the man beside him was sought as a dangerous character—a slayer.

"But you haven't told me yet why you wanted to find me." There was not a trace of fear in the low voice, nor any combativeness.

Peter leaned forward and peered at the face before him with his bright, near-sighted gray eyes before answering. It was a worn and sensitive face, young and yet ravaged; a face with delicate, clearly modelled features and dark sunken eyes. The perfectly shaped head had the smiting beauty of a profile on a Greek coin.

And this was the man whom Ethel had dismissed as a "sickly looking fellow!" If sickness was there, it was a sickness of the soul. The curved lips, drooping slightly at the corners, the dark, steady eyes with their depths of pain, did not suggest weakness so much as the helplessness of one who is an alien in the world where he must live. There was a permanent bewilderment in those eyes—the eyes of a baffled poet thrust into a world of ugly prose in which he could never be at home, bruised and broken and still wondering. A man like that, wounded beyond endurance, might strike to kill—and still not understand what it was all about.

"Surely you know," Peter said at last, speaking patiently as if to a child, "that you are under suspicion of the murder of Mrs. Ellsworth."

The curved lips tightened into a hard, straight line. The face before him became as still, as expressionless as if it were chiselled in stone.

"I don't know any Mrs. Ellsworth." The voice took on a remote metallic ring, as if each word were the dropping of a coin.

Peter stared a moment. Then he remembered something—something that had puzzled him.

"But you knew Sheila O'Shay?" he asked breathlessly.

"Yes, oh, yes—Sheila O'Shay." The words were hardly more than an audible sigh. "A great many people knew Sheila O'Shay!"

His hands were suddenly flung outward on the table in a singularly defenseless gesture. The knife, unnoticed, slid across the boards and fell noiselessly to the ground. The fat woman and her tumultuous offspring had wandered away out of sight.

"Yes," Peter said sternly, "but you wrote Sheila O'Shay a threatening letter. I don't know why you didn't take any pains to disguise it, but you didn't. Then you hung around outside the house, lying in wait for her. Sheila O'Shay was found murdered—and you are out here, hiding under an assumed name. You're absolutely no good as a fugitive, I'll admit—I could have done a lot better myself—but that's no sign you didn't do it. You trembled all over when I spoke to you."

"Oh, but that was before I knew you!" Orme's face broke into a radiant, confiding smile of sheer delight. "You're so very likeable, you know!" By the way, I don't think you're a policeman, are you?"

"No. I'm not," Peter said harshly. "But I'm just as bad. I'm going to take you to jail."

He wanted to take this unaccountable young man by the shoulders and shake him—shake him into a realization of the seriousness of the situation. It was like seeing a child watch the house burn down and clap his hands at the pretty fire.

"Well, that can't be helped, I suppose," Orme acquiesced.

"You'd have done better to face the music in the first place, if you couldn't get away any better than this," Peter said crossly. "You've made an awful mess of things."

"Yes," the young man nodded his head gravely. "I know—I do that often. I'm always making a mess of things."

"But hardly with your life in the balance!"

"Does it matter? Not a great deal, I think." Orme's tone was not in the least bitter. He might have been commenting on the prospect of rain.

"I'm afraid you'll wake up too late and find that it does!" Peter raged.

"Well, don't let it bother you. It's my—er, potential funeral, after all!" Again that winning, sunny smile, like a child watching the mounting flames. Against his will, Peter found himself smiling back.

"I won't say that whatever you say will be used against you, because you'll be just putty in the hands of the police, anyway. But would you mind telling me—did you really kill her?"

"Maybe so," the young man said. "But that will be for the police to find out."

And this, through all the long drive back to town, was the last word that Peter had from him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Did you put up any money on me?" Peter threw his hat into the nearest armchair and leaned forward to examine the top of the desk, but the familiar nickel was not in evidence.

"No," said Dr. Cavanaugh. "The sporting element would be lacking, unless I elaborated a system of odds. I'd hate to have you on my trail, young man—or perhaps this is what you call being on my trail already?"

The doctor's clear brown eyes smiled with warm friendliness into Peter's as he pulled forward a chair.

"Oh, no, I've just got into the habit of consulting you. I hope I'm not making a nuisance of myself."

"I've no doubt you hope it. But even if, you were a nuisance, you would regretfully persist."

"I suppose I would," Peter admitted.

"Well, then, if it's any comfort to you, I'm really not particularly busy at the moment and you may help yourself to the cigars. It's rather lucky for me that I've retired from active practice—you might not leave me much opportunity to collect from my patients."

"I'm glad I'm not bothering too awfully," Peter said cheerfully, ignoring the box of cigars which Dr. Cavanaugh extended and pulling forth his inevitable crushed package of cigarettes. "Because, you see, I do feel sort of responsible for this babe in the woods I turned over to the police."

Dr. Cavanaugh smiled ever so slightly.

"Do the police look on him as a babe in the woods?" he inquired.

"They do not," Peter said emphatically. "As a matter of fact, I'm surprised at him myself. Honestly, I felt as if I were throwing him to the wolves. It had to be done, of course, but I didn't think they'd need to be half as violent as they probably would be, on general principles, to get everything out of him. And yet there he sits and says absolutely nothing."

"They've questioned him in relays, 24 hours at a stretch. They've planted a man in the same cell with him to gain his confidence. They've done everything but light a bonfire under him, and they're getting annoyed."

"You seem rather pleased about it," the doctor observed noncommittally.

"I can't help being proud of his grit. It's a perfectly useless line to take, and it'll only make it harder for him in the end. The district attorney has got to the point where he's out for blood. Why, they even held before his eyes a copy of the 'Herald' with headlines about Sheila's murder and made him stare at it for hours—'Butcher' Joe crumpled under that stunt two years ago, you remember—and he just sits there, looking as if he were somewhere else."

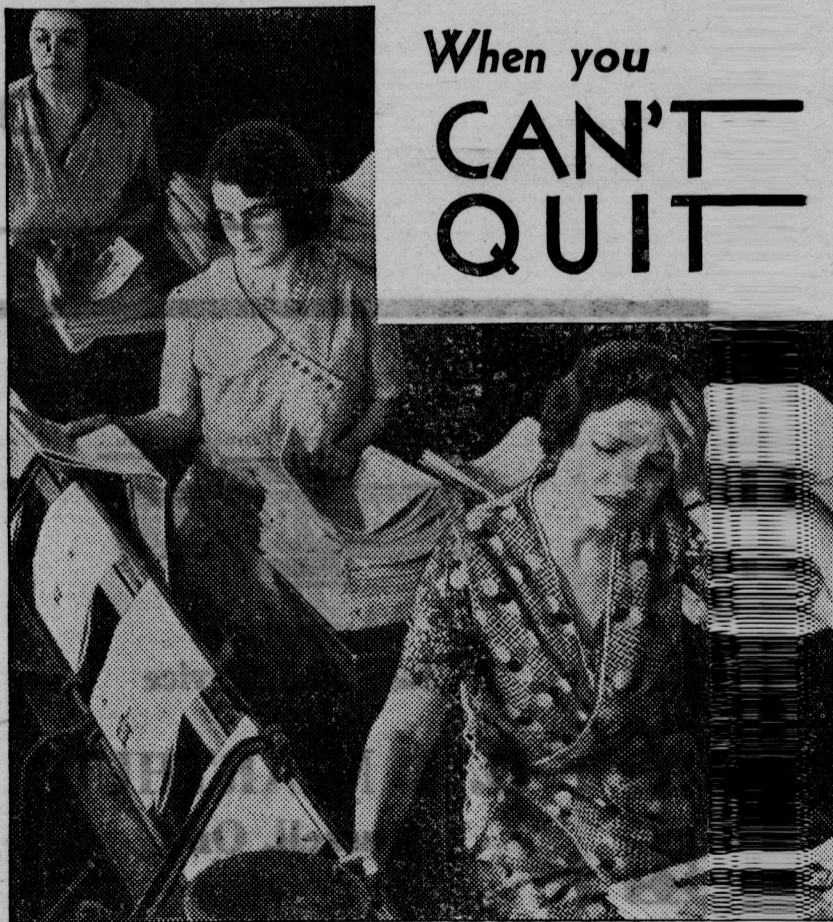
"It isn't as if he were an old hand; a 12-year-old child could have done better at covering his tracks. He really needs a guardian, and since I found him, I sort of feel that I'm it. At least I want him to have a fair

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and sweeter
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QUIT

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show. He isn't the ordinary criminal type at all."

"Among all the things we don't know about Sheila O'Shay's murder," Dr. Cavanaugh murmured between puffs of his cigar, "we don't know this one thing—that he was an ordinary criminal."

(To be continued.)

Wheat Is Up

The price of wheat has risen
And glorious news it is,
It means, you see,
There will shortly be
Some farm relief for biz.

The farmer in the dell
Will soon begin to yell
For sugar and spice
And everything nice,
And radio sets as well.

The wheels of trade will turn
So city folks can earn,
And every one here
Will whoop and cheer,
As far as I can learn.

—The N. Y. Times.

Picture Language

A story has come my way concerning a high dignitary of the Church who will not mention his name—before spending a holiday in Spain that country plunged into revolution.

The gentleman in question had so much enjoyed a breakfast of mushrooms and coffee that he decided to ask for more. He could speak no Spanish; but at school he remembered having won a prize for drawing. So, on the back of the menu, he drew a picture of two mushrooms and a cow, the latter to represent more milk.

The waiter looked at the drawing and returned a few minutes later with two umbrellas and a ticket for a bull fight!