

Truly a Floral Tribute

by *Vivian farmer*

CHAP 7

The worst was over, or was it? It was Monday. There had been two days to get used to the idea of Agnes's death, and they had. It was amazing how the mind adapted to the shock of events. One would think that the horror of the first moments would linger; Hilda had thought they would, but her feelings this morning were more resigned apprehension. Would the discovery of who had killed Agnes be a greater horror than her death? With a shrug, she banished the dark thoughts that were plaguing her, and turned her mind to the evening before.

It was early morning, and as was her practice, Hilda was sitting with her coffee, gazing unseeing out the porch windows to the pond beyond. Such a peaceful time. A time to wake slowly to the day ahead, A time to let one's thoughts float,

unfettered by focus, drifting aimlessly where they would. Just as the sun would burn the mist from the surface of the pond, bringing that world into sharp detail, so the demands of the day would vaporize these chimera. For now this time of random reflection allowed another level of her brain to sort and examine the impressions that persisted for attention.

Sunday afternoon, Jeremy, on driving her home from the lunch at the rectory, had excused himself, saying he had some things he wanted to do at the hospital. They had parted after agreeing to meet for lunch the today, at a little tea room near the there.

If Hilda had wondered why Jeremy Fegan, whom she had not seen for months and then only casually, was now taking so much of her time, it was only in passing. It seemed quite natural to be relying on him in this crisis. Nor did she wonder why William Thorn less of a presence than one might expect, considering the surface closeness of their association. Had they chosen to be included in social gatherings as a couple, or had they just drifted over the years, into that arrangement? Certainly both William and Hilda had found it convenient variously to have a female companion or an escort, but Hilda could not remember either one of them suggesting any formalization of this arrangement.

Hilda giggled, a sound both youthful and surprising from one of her years, at the notion of William asking her to go steady with him. It was as preposterous as the thought of him sharing the jealously kept secret of his special rose food. No, their relationship was purely practical, he required

a female companion and she found it convenient to have an escort, as well as someone to occasionally act as host when she entertained. Yet there was the puzzle of Amy hinting at something closer between Hilda and her father. Hilda decided that she would have to have a talk with William suggesting perhaps that they see less of each other. Or was she being presumptuous and reading more into the situations than was there? She set her coffee cup on a nearby table, and taking her secateurs and gardening gloves from the basket at the sun porch door, went down into the garden to prune off the dead blossoms from the roses.

Another person was examining the events of the previous days. They had gone awry somehow. It would not be long before some missed detail would connect in someone's mind, and the mystery of Agnes's murderer would be solved, if not the motive behind it. This must be prevented at all costs. But how? The most obvious was to provide an alternate solution, with a murderer who having met his end, would leave behind some incriminating evidence. The who, was obvious, but the how, would take some thought. It would have to happen soon, before there was time for much more investigation. Maybe it would be possible to rectify the botched murder and implicate a killer simultaneously. Maybe it was still possible to accomplish the desired end.

Rev. Mullet awoke slowly. He could hear a woman trying to hush a child, a child laughing with glee. Ah yes, he came awake, the Turley's were up and little Teddy was eager to get on with the day. The sound were muted, but

they were human sounds and very welcome to the rector's lonely life. He swung his feet out of bed. He too, was eager to start the day.

Joan Turley handed a wriggling young Teddy to his father. "Here, Frank. You put Teddy in his chair while I get his breakfast," she said. "Teddy, you can play with your father for a few minutes." The little boy passed from one pair of arms to the other.

"Settle down, you little frog," commanded his father with mock sternness. "If you don't stop kicking I'll turn you back into a tadpole."

"Teddy not a fwog. Fwogs hop," the little boy argued with solemn logic.

"Maybe you and I can go out after breakfast and see if we can find some frogs. There should be some big ones in the mill pond." Frank set his small son in the high chair. "Sound like fun?"

"Hunt fwogs! Hunt fwogs!" the little boy chanted.

Joan stopped her breakfast preparations to look at her two males, a grin on her face. "You haven't quieted him any," she scolded Frank. "We'll have the rector thinking he's harbouring hooligans."

John Mullet stepped into the kitchen, a broad smile on his face. "And what makes you think I wouldn't welcome an occasional hooligan?" he asked. "Morning all. Did you sleep well?" He sniffed appreciatively at the aroma of fresh coffee.

"Good-morning John," Joan greeted. "I slept well thank you, and if Frank didn't he certainly gave a good imitation." She poured cups of coffee for them all and placed them on the

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