

DRAGONS DRIVE YOU

CHAPTER VIII—Continued

By EDWIN BALMER

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What made justification for the taking of the life of another—of a man you had married?

Martin O'Mara had said to her, when last he was here—on Saturday: "When a wife kills a husband, no one else ever finds out why. To save her life, she'll never tell even her attorney more than a part. She shot him; and the fact speaks for itself the fullness of her reason. You were the first to see her afterward."

"Yes," said Agnes.

"Then you can best judge for yourself—no one, who was not there, can tell you as well—what you should do."

Agnes arose and dressed long before breakfast-time, though she knew she would not be summoned to court today.

Both Mr. Nordell and Martin O'Mara had told her that they would move for the exclusion of witnesses, except when testifying; and in a trial for murder, the judge would so order.

The morning paper came; and there again was Agnes Gleneth on the page beside Myrtle Lorrie and Martin O'Mara.

She gazed once more at the placid, confident countenance of Charles Lorrie, who had cast off the wife who had married him when they both were young, and who had borne him his daughter.

Here was that wife—Stella Lorrie—as now she was; and here was their daughter Janet. She was seventeen, and she had been graduated from a high school in Wisconsin last week, and had accompanied her mother yesterday to Chicago to be beside her mother today when Stella, the first wife, sat at the trial of Myrtle, the second wife.

Wife! Did any other word in all the language describe—or fail to describe—as many different relations? Both of these had been wives, and of the same man; and one had borne him a baby, and the other had killed him.

Here was Bert—Myrtle's Bert. ("Oh, God, Bert!") What part had he played in the killing? Some said—and Jeb was one of them—that the existence of Bert and the insurance on the life of Charles Lorrie completely explained the whole occurrence. Myrtle had shot her husband to go off with Bert—and the insurance.

Agnes shut her eyes; and she saw herself again in that room; and she knew, as she was returned to the feeling of the moment when Myrtle Lorrie first clung to her, that she had not come in upon a wife who had just killed her husband because of another man, and to collect his insurance.

It was very warm at the jail, and sultry and sticky. Myrtle perspired even when she sat still, after she had dressed for the courtroom.

She wore her platinum wedding ring and her engagement ring—sapphires and diamond set in platinum; and she turned them nervously on her damp finger. She had figured, when she held up her finger for him to slip them on it, that she could get away with marriage with him.

Why not? Wasn't marriage just living with a man? Wasn't that really all there was to it?

He'd give her a lot of money—more than she'd ever seriously dreamed of having; and she'd give him loving. But hers didn't do...

They were coming for her to take her to court—to be tried for the murder of Charles. Damn it, she never meant to kill him—just to make him leave her alone, sometimes.

Stella would be in the courtroom; Stella, whom he'd given the gate, but who yet had showed up Myrtle as a wife and lover. Well, Stella'd had an advantage; she'd loved the fathead; she'd not had to try to love him, thinking of somebody else.

"Can't you keep her out?" she had asked Cathal.

"Not if she wants to come."

"Stella ain't so frightful for forty. Some men might like her yet. Arent you going to have the jury, men?"

"Yes," said Cathal.

"Then the ones I can't get from Stella, Agnes can. I'll tell you—there's one type of man that never liked me; that's the type likes Agnes, I'll bet you. So have Agnes there for me."

"Agnes!" Cathal objected.

"That's how I think of her; wouldn't you? Say, sudden terror took its turn.—Agnes ain't going to throw me, is she? She ain't—"

"No," said Cathal. "But she won't be there when you first come in."

Myrtle Lorrie would have given much this morning if she could have counted on Agnes Gleneth's presence in the courtroom where she was to be tried for her life.

She was not in the old jail, but in the new one on the west side of the city; for, together with all other prisoners awaiting trial, she had been moved into the fine, modern structure of stone and steel directly in the rear of the new, imposing Criminal Courts building of Cook county.

Myrtle was now in the courtroom. Stella was staring at her! And she was staring at Stella. She couldn't take her eyes off Stella. And beside Stella was Charley's kid.

Where was somebody for her? Somebody that counted and could do good? Where was Agnes Gleneth? Oh, why in hell wasn't she here?

The damn' room was full of people, staring; but you couldn't see them, except Stella and Charley's kid.

Myrtle did her best to take it.

For two days they fought over the jury; it was Wednesday before Mr.

Nordell outlined to the 12 men at last selected—and the newspaper repeated to all who read—the case against Myrtle Lorrie. It was bad for her; very bad, as witness after witness built it up. It was much worse than Agnes had expected.

Agnes read it at home. For the state had decided not to call her; and Martin O'Mara told her that he could give her at least two hours' warning before he would put her on the witness-stand.

She felt shaky and half sick again. These were matters about Myrtle Lorrie which Martin O'Mara might not have known about his client. Yet now he had heard them; and he continued to defend her. Indeed, it was plain he was fighting for her only more hotly.

The newspaper writers spoke especially of how he fought. When Mr. Nordell put a question that might have a damaging answer, the defense attorney leaped to his feet.

"I object, Your Honor! I object!" "Overruled," said the judge, and told Mr. Nordell to proceed with the witness.

"Exception! . . . I take an exception! . . . Exception!" O'Mara struck back at the judge again and again.

Agnes could not completely understand it; but she could feel the fight in it.

Jeb brought with him, that night, the late editions which carried the report of the afternoon session of the trial. It was worse for Myrtle—and for Agnes—than the morning's disclosures.

Some of it, Jeb read to her; some he left to her to read to herself.

"Now, Glen, what are you going to do?"

"I'm going on, Jeb. I have to—haven't I?"

"Not as a defense witness."

"I have to—if he calls me."

"He'll call you. He'll call you; but you can give him a surprise on the stand."

"How?"

"When he questions you. You see now—you must see now—how things were. She was double-crossing her husband for her Bert. Wasn't she?"

Cathal telephoned to Agnes at nine that night.

"It looks," he said, "as if the state will rest tomorrow morning. If it's not too near noon, I'll put on my first witnesses at once; I figure I'll ask you to go on in the afternoon. Say, two o'clock."

"Yes," said Agnes. "I'll be there."

"Of course I will."

What had happened to her distress and disturbance? He was fighting; he had been fighting all day, and was spent, but with the fight still in him. She could feel it in his voice; and she aligned herself again with him.

"How's the trial going—really?"

"Really?" repeated Cathal.

"I mean with you. You know how many of those things are true; the papers don't—do they?"

"No," said Cathal; "but some of the things are true enough. But they've got nothing to do with whether she did murder. That's all."

Agnes hung up, but sat by the telephone without stirring. She was warm and excited and satisfied, as she had not been all day.

It was eleven, next morning, when she left the house with her mother and Bee. They avoided the train. Simmons drove them, in the big car, to the city, where they picked up Jeb. Then they stopped at a quiet little restaurant where they could be alone, and where Jeb had had luncheon ordered in advance.

The noonday was very hot. The heat, indeed, supplied the third topic to the people of the city; the others were the further advance in stocks, and the trial.

Today it seemed almost more the trial of Agnes Gleneth than of Myrtle Lorrie. Today Agnes's pictures and her name exceeded Myrtle's in size and display. Agnes had ceased to care what they said even about herself.

She sat at the restaurant table be-

side Jeb, and with her mother opposite and Bee beside her, and looked down at jellied consommé in the cup before her. She lifted her spoon into the cup, but not to her lips.

Jeb could eat; Bee could eat; her mother could, a little. Agnes sipped lead-tea.

What Myrtle Lorrie had done—and what Agnes Gleneth was to support her in having done—divided any group of people. They did not debate whether she had shot her husband; that was undisputed. It was whether she "should" have shot him or not; or at least whether, having done so, she should now be punished further.

Jeb was against her—Jeb, who, if Agnes would marry him, would "tip up the cup" of sensation with her, drain it to the last drop while they both were young; and then? Why—he said—think now of that?

Her mother had no pity for Myrtle; her mother who had given herself completely to her love when young, and who now was being neglected for another. Bee, somewhat less surely, wanted Myrtle convicted. Not electrocuted, but imprisoned at least until she was old—until, for her, the life of sensation ceased.

Martin O'Mara would justify and free her; not because he would make money by it. He could have made money "fixing" taxes, but he would not. Emotionally this sort of case appealed to him; he wanted to defend cases like this. He would get Myrtle off.

The talk at the table changed nothing. Simmons drove them at last to the Criminal Courts building. A crowd lined the curb. People were everywhere in front, everywhere inside. Windows of all the courtrooms were open. Photographers formed the edge of the lane that was opened.

Agnes never knew, until she saw the pictures in the papers the following day, how she got from the car to the doors of the court.

An elevator lifted them to the hallway outside the courtroom where Myrtle Lorrie was being tried; and there they met O'Mara.

He led Beatrice Gleneth and Beatrice Ayreforth into the courtroom, and then returned to Agnes and Jeb in the hall.

"I've one witness to finish with before you," he said to Agnes. "He'll be on when we start again, in a few minutes. He won't take long." And he showed Agnes and Jeb together to the defense witness-room.

It was a plain, stern little chamber with two windows, a table and six chairs; it was vacant; but the feel of conflict filled it. Not strange, with Jeb and Martin O'Mara with her in the little room!

Cathal, at least outwardly, was the cooler of the two. He wore a light suit of dark gray, and he had just changed his linen; and the excitement which he controlled gave him better bearing.

"I'm sorry the day's so hot, Miss Gleneth," he said.

"I don't mind. Don't bother about me, please; and don't worry. I'll try not to lose my head."

Cathal caught breath, looking at her in her light, simple dress.

"You'll not. I'll ask you only what you know I'll ask. What the State will ask you, no one can tell; but I'll be before you to help you all I can."

"Thank you."

The door opened for the warning to Cathal that the judge was returning to the courtroom. Cathal hurried away.

Agnes stood stock still for a long minute; and Jeb merely stared at her. When at last she dropped down upon one of the straight, hard chairs, she seated herself, restlessly, upon another. These two had nothing left to say. Only at last, when Agnes was summoned to the courtroom, he got up with her; but he parted with her at the door of the witness-room.

"Good girl!" he said, and gave her his hand. "And good luck, Glen!" And then, to save himself, he could not hold back the gibe as she went to be Martin O'Mara's witness. "Go get your little pal—and her lawyer, Glen—their hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the shooting."

CHAPTER IX

Before she sat down in the witness-chair, Agnes stood for a moment, facing the courtroom. She had been sworn, facing the judge, who was beside her now, at her right and a little behind her.

The jury, twelve men in two rows, were at her left. A court reporter, with pencil and his book open, was almost at her feet to her right.

Directly in front of her stood Martin O'Mara; and over his left shoulder she saw Myrtle Lorrie seated at a table. Agnes would hardly have known Myrtle, had not the newspaper pictures of recent days prepared her for her present appearance. Myrtle was in black, with not even a touch of color, except a piping of white in the neck of her dress and on the sleeves.

Black became her and made her look even younger and slither than she was; and it made her skin whiter. She had on no rouge at all, and little or no lipstick. She looked not in the least like a killer.

Mr. Nordell was a few feet from her, seated at another table with two younger men with books and papers. That was the table of "the State." Beyond were benches row after row, where people sat and leaned forward. You could feel—Agnes felt—the clash of the conflict which swayed them.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

On Success for Women—

Are They Failures Because of Lack of Something to Do?

IN A recently published symposium of twenty-eight authorities on the present status of women, one well-known writer tries to explain women's failure. She says it is natural for women to fail. For "it is out of the necessity for food and shelter and for providing for the family that most men have fashioned success, and the lack of this insistent necessity has been a great handicap on the activities of women."

"What they have had to do," we are told, "women have often done very well indeed. Crises of illness in their children call forth from mothers efforts that in other phases would be termed heroic. Likewise, during the World War, women faced danger and loss gallantly, and they were happier than at any other time in this Twentieth century. But there are today so few things that women have got to do."

If our readers find that ridiculous, I am glad they agree with me, says a noted writer on subjects pertaining to women. To call women failures because more men are in "Who's Who," because less women than men have made positions for themselves in the professions and industries of the country, is preposterous on the face of it. It leaves entirely out of account the fact that success cannot be measured by rule of thumb, that it is a relative term. Suppose a woman who might have made a successful office manager, a well-known author, or a famous psychologist, chooses instead to give the major portion of her time and interest to raising a family. Is she a failure? That phase of the question has been so often and

so ably discussed that I shall not try to add to it.

However, in the statements that men have a head start for success in the necessity to provide for a family, and that women are at a disadvantage because today "there are so few things they have got to do," there is food for thought, and, perhaps, for discussion, by our readers.

While it is undoubtedly true that the success of many men has grown out of their necessity to earn a living, there are countless thousands to whom that necessity has been the obstacle between them and success. There, again, it is the question of what is meant by success. It seems to me that acquiring wealth is only one kind of success, and it is success only to the man who started out with that as an object. And I have known personally men whose connotation of success was making a worthwhile contribution in certain of the arts or sciences, men with ability and talent for the work of their dreams, who failed because of the necessity for the daily grind in a gainful occupation.

As to there being "so few things that women have got to do"—isn't the emancipation of women from complete absorption in domestic or other duties their great opportunity for growth? In Europe, the American woman is regarded as notoriously her husband's superior in matters of mental growth and cultural attainment. The reason is obvious, of course, in his preoccupation with breadwinning which sets her free for the higher aims of self-improvement and cultural and civic betterment for her community. Isn't that one kind of success?

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