CRUCIBLE

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

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SYNOPSIS

Barbara Sentry, seeking to sober up her escort, Johnnie Boyd, on the way home from a party, slaps him, and attracts the attention of a policeman, whom the boy knocks down. As he arrests him, Professor Brace of Harvard comes to the rescue and drives Barbara home. On the way they see Barbara's father driving from the direction of his office at 12:45, but when he gets home he tells his wife it is 11:15 and that he's been playing bridge at the club. Next morning, while Barbara is telling her mother about her adventure, an urgent phone call comes from Mr. Sentry's office after his departure. Arriving home in the late afternoon, Sentry reports his office has been robbed and a Miss Wines, former temporary employee, killed. The evening papers luridly confirm the story, and Sentry takes it hard. Mary, elder daughter, is in love with Neil Ray, young interne at the hospital where she works.

CHAPTER II—Continued

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Barbara was called to the telephone, and Endle arrived and came in to speak to them while Mary made last preparations. Mrs. Loran's brother, Endle, had somehow made a fortune in the last four or five years, owned a blatantly large motor yacht on which scandalous parties were reported to occur, was perfectly sure of his welcome everywhere; and he clapped Mr. Sentry on the shoulder and said jocosely:

"Well, Sentry, a lot of free advertising, eh? Headlines! Produce House Murder! You and Gus ought to have a flock of sightseers tomorrow. Better lay in a stock of bananas, eh? Sell 'em to people to take home as souvenirs!"

Mary, in the hall, called, "I'm ready, Mr. Endle." They departed.

Mrs. Sentry said icily, "He and Mrs. Loran are alike, aren't they?" And as Barbara returned from the telephone, "Who was it, Barbara?"

"Johnny Boyd!" Barbara was indignant. "He thought last night was a joke, and he thought all this was funny! I shan't ever give him a date again!"

"I suppose it will strike a lot of people as a joke on us," Mr. Sentry agreed, "I'm glad father isn't alive. He was strong on the dignity of the firm." And he reflected: "I'd better run in and reassure mother. Care to come, Ellen?" Old Mrs. Sentry lived in solitary dignity in one of the Back Bay hotels.

"I think not," Mrs. Sentry decided, but when Mrs. Furness phoned presently to ask whether she could bring Miss Glen over—"She's so anxious to talk to Mr. Sentry about this terrible crime!"—Mrs. Sentry said: "I'm sorry. We're going out!" Others would be telephoning. She and Mr. Sentry presently departed in the limousine for town.

Barbara stayed at home. She was reading the story in the paper again when the doorbell rang. Nellie came to say that a young man wished to see her. "He asked for Mr. Sentry," she explained, "and I told him you were the only one at home."

Barbara went into the hall. The young man said, "Miss Sentry?"

"I'm Miss Barbara."

"I'm Dan Fisher," he explained, watching her appreciatively. "I'm a reporter. My editor sent me out to—well, to see if your father had any ideas about this murder. And to get some pictures and so on." He added, "I'm sorry to bother you." And then he grinned and said, "If I were you, I wouldn't even talk to me."

Barbara liked him. "You're a funny reporter," she protested. "I thought they wore their hats in the house."

"You're thinking of plain-clothes men, policemen," he suggested, chuckling; and he added, surprisingly: "I met you once. You don't remember? You were with Joe Dane in New Haven after the Princeton game two years ago. Joe introduced us."

"Oh! Were you reporting the game?"

"No, I'd been helping coach the Princeton ends. Used to play a little, myself. That was before I went into the newspaper game."

She said courteously: "Why, then we're really old friends! Will you come in? There's no one at home, but father and mother will be back soon."

He hesitated, shook his head. "Thanks," he said, "I don't think I will." And he confessed, a little amused at his own scruples: "Probably a real red-hot reporter would get some pictures out of you, and an interview. If your father were here—I'll tell you, I may come back later."

She nodded, understanding his forbearance, grateful. "I shouldn't know what to say," she admitted.

"If I were you, I wouldn't say anything to reporters," he advised. "Just refer them to your father. "I don't mean for any of you to be mysterious about it, of course. That would only make it worse." And he said: "Thanks a lot. Good-night."

Barbara was almost sorry he departed. Her thoughts were terrifying company. But when she heard her father and mother return she met them smiling.

"Well, you missed it!" she announced in lively tones. "I've been entertaining a reporter!"

"A reporter?" Mrs. Sentry echoed resentfully. "Ridiculous! Barbara, you shouldn't have let him in the house!"

"Oh, he was rather nice! His name's Dan Fisher, and he went to Princeton, and knows Joe Dane." Joe was Linda's brother, at Yale. He and Phil Sentry were classmates there. "But he wanted to see father," Barbara explained, and she added mischievously, "I tried to get him to come in and talk to me."

Mrs. Sentry said in sardonic reproach, "Weren't you—unnecessarily hospitable?"

"Well, he said we shouldn't be mysterious about it," Barbara assured them. "He said that would just make it worse."

Mrs. Sentry spoke to her husband. "Arthur, you'd better call up Carl Bettle, make him stop that sort of thing." Bettle was publisher of one of the morning papers, and an old friend. "I won't be hounded by reporters."

Mr. Sentry shook his head. "We've got to expect that, Ellen, for a day or two. Barbara's right. To refuse would just make things worse."

He added, "And after all, we've nothing to hide."

"Oh, Don't Be So Funny!" Phil Exclaimed.

CHAPTER III

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Miss Wines was found dead in the hall outside Mr. Sentry's office at about eight o'clock Friday morning; a Friday in October. The afternoon papers cried the news; the morning papers on Saturday spread the tale over three or four pages.

Phil Sentry, a junior at Yale, would have slept late that morning. There was to be a football game in the afternoon, and the pre-game celebration the night before had in his case risen to a somewhat fevered pitch. He had no early class; but Fritz Rush, his roommate, had; and when Fritz returned to the room in mid-forenoon he pulled the bed clothes violently off Phil.

"Wake up, Phil!" he shouted. "You've got your name in the papers!"

Phil blinked sleepily. "What? What's happened? We didn't start anything last night, did we?"

"Read 'em and weep!" Fritz insisted. "All about the murder in high life! Pretty stenographer foully slain! Here, have a look!"

Phil sat up and peered, blinking, at the headlines; he turned the pages and saw photographs of the dead girl, of his father, of Mr. Loran, and of Sentry and Loran's old brick building in the market district. The history of the firm, founded by Phil's great-grandfather, was related; and his father's clubs were listed, and his mother's charities.

The names of Loran and Sentry, even though the connection was slight, lent a certain importance to this murder of a pretty stenographer; yet an old newspaper man, though the names might have been meaningless to him, would have guessed from the extent of the spread that there was more to come, that there was a whisper of sensation in the air.

Even Phil sensed this faintly as he glanced through the pages; but before he had finished, two or three fellows came in to jest at his expense. Was Agnes Wines one of his conquests, they demanded. What was this power he had over women? Where did he bury his dead? He grinned, and then swore.

"Cut the comedy," he said harshly. "Haven't you guys any sense of decency? She looks like a nice kid."

"Where were you, Mr. Bones," Joe Dane demanded in inquisitorial tones, "between the hours of—"

"Oh, don't be so funny!" Phil exclaimed. He stalked into the shower, took it hot and cold, hot and cold till his head cleared, thought how all this would distress his mother, thought of telephoning her reassurances, thought he might send her a wire, thought he might go home over Sunday, and then remembered the football game and did not want to miss it, and in the end did nothing that day at all.

But he did read the papers more carefully. The police had found the young Italian in Freedom, Maine. He had been able to account for all his recent movements. Other young men, friends of the dead girl, were being questioned. The girl's father, who was a scallop fisherman, had hurried to Boston. His picture appeared; a long-legged, sad, drooping little old man.

The police, Phil read, were investigating the fact that Miss Wines had been mysteriously absent from her lodgings for three days in August last. The twentieth, twenty-first, and twenty-second. She had told her landlady that she was going to visit a girl friend in New Hampshire; but this girl—not named—denied that Agnes Wines had visited her, or had even planned to do so.

Much was made of this fact. One of the papers said in so many words that the police were seeking the dead girl's unknown lover, and carried a subsidiary headline:

LOVE CLEW IN PRODUCE HOUSE MURDER

Phil threw the paper aside at last, and finished dressing; but when he went to lunch, more than one comedian asked, "Were you mysteriously absent from your accustomed haunts in August, Phil?" He grinned and took it, as the easiest way to put an end to this raillery; which even the innocent may feel, he tried to recall where he had been on the dates given. He remembered at last that he had returned just then from a cruise on Bill Hoke's schooner, had stopped in Boston to see his father, found that Mr. Sentry had gone to New York on business, and himself had gone on to York Harbor that afternoon.

He was relieved at being able thus to account for his time; and later he forgot the murder for the football game. Yale went into the last quarter trailing by ten points; and when in a feverish fifteen minutes they had fought through to victory, there was not a normal vocal chord in the Bowl.

There was celebrating that must be done, and Phil did it. What had happened in Boston was forgotten for that evening; but it must have stayed disturbingly in the back of his mind, since though it was three or four o'clock in the morning before he went to bed, he woke soon after ten, and remembered, and opened his door to get the Sunday morning paper in the hall outside.

He read it, read every line in it that concerned Miss Wines. There were only two things really new in the story of the murder. The autopsy had revealed a probable motive for the crime; and the hour when Agnes Wines was killed had been fixed. A night watchman in a warehouse nearby had heard the shot. He had thought at the time that it was a truck back-firing, probably two or three streets away, because the sound was muffled; but now he was convinced that it was in fact a shot which he had heard. He was sure of the time, having finished his one o'clock rounds just before. Probably five or ten minutes past one, he thought.

Phil was relieved to see that that blaze of publicity which yesterday had focused on his family and on that of Mr. Loran had somewhat abated now. Yet he knew so vividly how they would each react to this ugly experience. His father would be concerned about the effect on the business; his mother would resent the offense to her personal dignity; Mary, like so many persons completely egocentric, would feel personally wronged as though the world had conspired to make her ridiculous and unhappy. Barbara—Phil smiled, thinking of Barbara—would keep her head high, make a joke out of the whole thing, try to make them laugh.

He thought of telephoning them some word of reassurance, but the telephone was unsatisfactory. He felt vaguely that they might need him; that there might be something he could do. And also, an intangible uneasiness oppressed him. There was something in the tone of the newspaper stories that suggested the writers knew more than they wrote. Phil was young enough to want to be assured that everything was all right; he was old enough to want to help and comfort if he could.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Task of Protecting Bathers Has Now Been Reduced to Art by Lifesavers

Now the lifeguard starts to the rescue before the victim knows he's in trouble!

That's how scientific the art of preventing drowning has become on the beaches of Los Angeles county, notes a writer in the Los Angeles Times.

And when it works on 40,000,000 persons it must be a good system.

Furthermore, if a swimmer gets into trouble, swallows some water, passes out and is dragged ashore, he doesn't have to worry about the lifeguard sticking a hatpin through or tying a handkerchief around his tongue. The old method of resuscitation is as passe as skirts on a woman's bathing suit. Resuscitation is painless nowadays.

Lifesaving has become a profession. Its members are proud and jealous of their status. They won't even let you drown if you want to. That puts a black mark on their records.

All these things become apparent as the water warms up, the air grows balmy and the crowds start flocking to the miles of patrolled beaches.

From now on the lifeguard has his job cut out for him.

He's ready for it. He has to be.

Guards are chosen nowadays on such a strict basis that only the best qualified ever get to the point of being paid members of the various groups functioning from Long Beach around to the Ventura county line.

Rip tides, incidentally, cause 78 per cent of the rescues. And most of the persons who have to be rescued are men. The women are more cautious and their bodies naturally are more buoyant.

Luther League of America

The Luther League of America is a national organization having for its purpose the unification of the young people's religious societies that are connected with the Lutheran churches in America. It was founded at Pittsburgh, Pa., in 1895. The motto is "Of the Church, by the Church, for the Church."

Frosting a Cake for Judges to Sample

A professional cake baker, frosting one of the hundreds of cakes which were made up in the Experimental Kitchen Laboratory, maintained by C. Houston Goudiss in New York City, in the course of selecting the winners in his recent Cake Recipe Contest.

By C. HOUSTON GOUDISS

NATURALLY, I am accustomed to seeing exhibits of delicious and interesting foods in the Experimental Kitchen Laboratory that I maintain in New York City. But in all the years of its existence, it has never been a busier nor a more inviting place than during the last few weeks when the home economists on my staff have been busily testing and judging the many fine cake recipes submitted by readers of this paper in our recent Cake Recipe Contest.

Imagine, if you can, a big cheerful and colorful kitchen filled with long tables upon which row after row of handsome cakes were arranged—proudly testifying to the skill of the homemakers who cherish the recipes from which they were made.

Every Type of Cake Entered.

A whole tableful of white cakes, with and without icing. Chocolate and cocoa cakes of every possible type. All manner of cakes, fragrant and delicious — spice, ice cream, honey, caramel, maple syrup, nut, date, pineapple, orange, lemon, butterscotch, jam, banana, raisin, oatmeal, cocoanut and marble cakes. Cakes baked in long sheets, square cakes, round cakes, layer cakes. Old-fashioned cakes from grandmothers' recipe books. Very modern and up-to-date cakes. And even one that was said to have been a favorite with General Robert E. Lee. I've never seen anything to compare with the collection, even at the biggest State Fair!

Do you wonder that the home economists on my staff required several weeks to pick the winners? For with such a wealth of exceptional cakes from which to choose, selecting those for top honors, was indeed difficult.

The cake bakers were trained for their work. They followed the recipes precisely. They measured accurately. They checked oven temperatures.

The scoring system was highly scientific. And we can say with conviction that no matter how close the race, the winners definitely outpointed even their closest rivals.

First Prize Winner.

The first prize of $25.00 went to Mrs. D. F. Kelly, 1004 Charles St., Whitewater, Wis.

Second Prize Winners.

The five second prizes were awarded to Mrs. H. Harshbargen of 2427 Fifth Ave., Altoona, Pa.; R. A. Williams, 12075 Rosemary Ave., Detroit, Mich.; Mrs. C. A. Burns, Box 788, Oakland, Miss.; Miss Sadie Cunningham, Avonmore, Pa.; and Mrs. Laura Meyer, 107 Pleasant St., Plymouth, Wis.

Third Prize Winners.

Mrs. T. H. Fjone, Flaxville, Mont.; Mrs. Lester Ralston, 127 South Judd St., Sioux City, Iowa; Mrs. Harry A. Kramer, 16 Marin Road, Manor, Calif.; Mrs. F. D. McDonald, Route 1, Amherst, Texas; Vera Tygar, Commodore, Pa.; Mrs. George Ahlborn, R. D. No. 1, Mt. Pleasant, Pa.; Mrs. B. A. Robinson, Box 578, Emmett, Idaho; Jean Guthrie, 4712 Campbell St., Kansas City, Mo.; Mrs. Walter Richter, Bonduel, Wis.; Mrs. P. C. Blakely, Alden, Mich.

Honorable Mention.

Emogene Williams, Damon, Texas; Mrs. Simon Moen, Norma, N. D.; Mrs. Dick Collins, Masonville, Iowa; Mrs. B. F. Herman, Box 1118, Crosby, Miss.; Mrs. Paul Lorenz, P. O. Box 225, Strathmore, Calif.; Mrs. S. S. Arentz, Simpson, Nev.; Mrs. Vida Hiiger, Box 257, Rockland, Mich.; Mrs. Grace H. Peterson, Box 335, Amherst, Wis.; Mrs. Cecil Skinner, Bedford, Wyo.; Mrs. Joe Furnace, 317 West Twentieth St., South Sioux City, Neb.

My thanks and my compliments to every homemaker who submitted a recipe. I only regret that everyone who submitted a recipe could not win a prize.

For Warm Weather Comfort

REDUCE

By This Easy, Comfortable Method

Send for the Free Bulletin Offered by C. Houston Goudiss

When the temperature mounts, fat hinders heat loss. The body temperature of the overweight individual is more likely to rise than that of the thin person, and he is therefore more liable to heat prostration.

For greater comfort, better appearance and for improved health, the man or woman who is overweight should send for the reducing bulletin offered free by C. Houston Goudiss, and reduce by the safe and sane method of counting calories.

The bulletin is complete with a chart, showing the caloric value of all the commonly used foods and it contains sample menus that you can use as a guide to scientific weight reduction.

Just send a postcard to C. Houston Goudiss at 6 East 39th Street, New York City, asking for his reducing bulletin.

World of Difference

Many a man has mistaken "gall" for grit.

How Women in Their 40's Can Attract Men

Here's good advice for a woman during her change (usually from 38 to 52), who fears she'll lose her appeal to men, who worries about hot flashes, loss of pep, dizzy spells, upset nerves and moody spells.

Get more fresh air, 8 hrs. sleep and if you need a good general system tonic take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, made *especially for women*. It helps Nature build up physical resistance, thus helps give more vivacity to enjoy life and assist calming jittery nerves and disturbing symptoms that often accompany change of life. WELL WORTH TRYING!

A Man of Wealth

A learned man has always riches in himself.—Phaedrus.

The crying of children is sometimes an indication of WORMS in the system. The cheapest and quickest medicine for ridding children or adults of these parasites is Dr. Peery's "Dead Shot" Vermifuge. 50c a bottle at druggists or Wright's Pill Co., 100 Gold St., New York, N.Y.

AROUND THE HOUSE

Dull-Bottomed Pans.—Save heat and money by using pots and pans with black or satin-finished bottoms, which absorb heat more evenly and rapidly than those with shiny bottoms.

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Help Children Help Selves.—Buttons on small children's clothing should be from ¾ to 1¼ inches in diameter so that the child can easily button his own clothes.

• • •

Flush-Type Molding.—By using flush-type steel or wood moldings dust-catching corners may be eliminated and the housework made easier and more thorough.

• • •

Wrap Meats to Store.—Research shows that cooked meat stored in a refrigerator loses the least weight when wrapped in paraffin paper or stored in a covered container.

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