

Murder At Bridge

by ANNE AUSTIN, author of "THE BLACK PIGEON" and "THE AVENGING PARROT" and "MURDER BACKSTAIRS".

A FEACTION

SECTION

1930

BEGIN HERE TODAY
A number of people could have killed JUANITA SELIN at her bridge party; JUDGE MILES MILES, for one, had to wait the gun and silence with which she was, however, was not the only one. There was another, FLORA MILES. In Nita's room at the time of the murder, reading a newspaper, was a man, Miles' theory, but which is from DEXTER SPRAGUE, is another. OLIVE HAMMOND, and POLLY REALE, who were in the solarium together, and JANET HAYMOND, in love with Sprague, also are suspicious.

DUNDEE believes that Nita recognized Sprague, the shy, good-tempered person, came down from New York for blackmail, receiving \$10,000 and a bullet, and that Sprague had carried out the scheme.

Nita will stand the fact that she had Sprague contrive her name to summon LYDIA CARR, who she feared death would bring to her. Nita was killed by a New York gunman.

Nita has burned papers, intending to burn them, and Dundee and Dundee thinks the murderer will return, looking for them. At the office of the *INDIANAPOLIS STAR*, returning him of an impromptu bridge party Wednesday at the Miles' home, to which Sprague had come uninvited, he spoke with the news of Sprague's murder.

His body is found in the trophy room at the Miles' house. Penny says that Sprague disappeared mysteriously from the room. Miles' puzzle is this: Flora over him, and Dundee learns that all three of the original suspects had an opportunity to kill him.

NOW GO-ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

THE Miles home, still known in Hamilton as the Hackett place, since it had been built more than thirty years before by Flora's father, old Silas Hackett, dead these seven years, dominated one of the most beautiful of the wooded hills which encircled Mirror lake in the Brentwood section.

Of modified Tudor architecture, its deep red, mellowed bricks had achieved in three decades almost the same aged dignity and impressiveness that characterized the time-culture mansion in England which Silas Hackett, architect had used as an inspiration.

The big house faced the lake, a long series of landscaped terraces leading down to the water's edge, but the driveway wound from the state road up a side hill, to the main entrance at the rear of the house.

Once before—on Sunday, the day after Nita Selin's murder, when he had come to interview Lydia Carr and had secured the alibi which had eliminated Dexter Sprague as a suspect—Dundee had driven his car up this hill between the tall yew hedges.

But then he had taken the fork which led to the hooded doorway over the kitchen; had descended the kitchen stairs with Lydia, to the servants' sitting room in the basement.

Now he continued along the main driveway to the more impressive entrance, whose flanking, slim turrets frowned down upon the light for fear he'll be seen from the windows, but he can see well enough to make out how the screens work.

"I'll bet you anything you like Sprague stayed in this room for an hour or two, the way he thought the coast was clear, then eased up on his screen, intending to climb out of the window and drop to the ground.

Not much of a drop at that. You can see that the tall hedge on this side of the driveway comes pretty near up to these windows.

"Well, I figure he laid his hat on this cabinet, intending to reach in for it when he was outside, but that he made some little noise which the gunman was listening for, and that when he got the screen up this high, the gunman, crouching under the window, let go with the same gun and silencer that he used to bump off Nita.

"I've got Miles' word for it that neither her nor nobody else heard a shot.... Of course, nobody knew Sprague was in here, and since his hat and stick was both missing from the hall closet, they took it for granted he'd beat it.... Any objections to that theory, boy?"

"Just a few—one in particular," Dundee said. "But I grant it's a good one, provided Dr. Price's autopsy bears you out as to the course of the bullet, and that Caraway finds Sprague's fingerprints on that contrivance for raising the screen. Even then—"

But Dundee was not allowed to finish his sentence, for Strawn was summoned to the telephone by Whitson. When he returned there was a slightly bewildered look on his heavy old face.

"That's funny.... Collins—the lad I sent to check up on the taxi companies—says he's located the driver that answered Sprague's call last night.

"The driver says he was told to wait for Sprague at the foot of the hill, on the main road; says he waited there until 10:30, then went back to town, sore'n a boiled owl."

"It doesn't look exactly as if Sprague were afraid of any one outside of this house last night, does it?" Dundee asked. "By the way, I suppose you've got for every one who was here?"

"Sure!" But again Captain Strawn looked uncomfortable. "But we haven't been able to locate the Beale girl and Olive Hammond."

A PALE-FACED, baldheaded butler had materialized while his master was speaking. "Beg pardon, sir, but I did not close the trophy room windows because I thought you might be using the room again."

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