DATE-LINE FOR DOOM

a New BRET HALLIDAY
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By BRETT HALLIDAY

Woman Missing

MICHAEL SHAYNE was drinking his first early-morning cup of black coffee liberally laced with Five-Star cognac when an impatient knock sounded on the door of his apartment overlooking Biscayne Bay.

The red-headed detective got up with a frown of annoyance, crossed the room with the hem of a shabby bathrobe flapping about his bare legs, and pulled the door open.

Two men stood in the hallway. The one in the lead was about thirty, with a thin, haggard face and dark circles under his eyes. He was incongruously dressed for that hour in a rumpled tuxedo and a black bow tie that was slightly askew. He spoke nervously as he pressed forward:

"Mr. Shayne? My name is Rowan. Charles Rowan. My wife has disappeared and I thought... that is, Herbert suggested... ." He paused uncertainly, turning for con-
firmation to the younger man who lounged across the
threshold behind him.

"I'm Herbert Melzner." He wore a polo shirt and slacks,
and there was a hint of mockery on the smooth, tanned face
and in the light blue eyes. "Grace . . . Mrs. Rowan, that
is . . . is my sister, and when Charles got himself in a dither
about her not coming home last night I suggested we come
to you."

Shayne stood aside and waved a big hand toward chairs
across the room. "Sit down. Herbert Melzner?" he re-
peated reflectively, touselling his bristly red hair as he pulled
the door shut behind his visitors. "The name sounds fa-
miliar." He grinned sudden recollections. "Aren't you the
lad who's notorious in the scandal columns for throwing
away your money on fast women and slow horses?"

"Never mind my brother-in-law, Mr. Shayne," said Charles
Rowan impatiently, seating himself on the edge of a deep
chair. "I want you to find my wife and persuade her to
come home."

"Where do you think she's gone?" Shayne crossed to his
own chair and lifted the steaming cup of coffee royal to
his lips.

"I . . . don't know." Rowan's hesitation was hardly per-
ceptible. "I sat up waiting for her all night and became so
worried by six o'clock that I telephoned Herbert to learn if
he had seen her."

"You might have known she wouldn't come to me," Melz-
ner said drily.

"Why not?" demanded Shayne.

The younger man shrugged. "Grace and I don't get along
very well. Just a couple of weeks ago . . . ."

"You and she are always quarreling," Rowan broke in
impatiently. "I had to talk to someone."

"Where was your wife last night?" asked Shayne.

"I didn't even know she intended to go out until I returned
late from a banquet and the housekeeper told me she had
left the house earlier without saying where she was going
or when she would return. I kept expecting her every mo-
ment, but when daylight came I felt I had to do something."

"You'll have to tell Shayne the truth if you expect him
to accomplish anything," said Melzner coldly. "My sister
is a bit of a fool," he went on to the detective. "She's been
carrying on an affair for weeks with a young gigolo named
Ted Dinker."

"I've warned her he's nothing but a fortune hunter," mut-
tered Rowan.

Melzner laughed derisively. "What a shock he's going
to get if he has eloped with her when he discovers all her
money is tied up in a trust fund with mine."

"Let me get this straight," said Shayne patiently. "You
suspect your wife may have eloped with a man named Ted Dinker?"

"I don't know what to think."

"Grace is always making a fool of herself over younger men," put in Herbert Melzner. "If she were my wife I'd have put my foot down long ago."

"She's impulsive," Rowan said slowly. "But I can't believe she would... Mr. Shayne, there must be no publicity but I want you to find Grace at once. No matter what she has done."

"How do you know she hasn't returned already?" Shayne looked at his watch. "How long since you left your house?"

"An hour," Rowan hazarded, glancing at his brother-in-law for confirmation. "Herbert came at once when I phoned him, and picked me up in his car. We've been driving around aimlessly ever since... trying to decide what was best."

Melzner nodded. "It must have been just six-thirty when I picked you up on the sidewalk in front of your place. I noticed the newsboy cutting across your lawn to deliver the morning paper, and he invariably reaches my house, two blocks farther down, at six-forty."

"It's seven-thirty now," Shayne said. "Suppose your wife did return after you left the house, Rowan, could she get in?"

"Of course. She has her own key to the front door. Do you think I should have waited longer?"

Shayne shrugged his wide shoulders and said, "I simply think we should check up before starting a search for her." He got up and went to the wall telephone. "Anyone at your place to answer the phone in case your wife has returned and is asleep?"

"Mrs. Jenson. The housekeeper. She'll be coming down about this time to prepare breakfast."

"Does she know your wife is missing?"

"She knows nothing about it. She retired to her third-floor room immediately after I came in last night, and I presume she thinks we are both still in bed as we would customarily be at this hour."

Shayne nodded. "I'll try not to alarm her unnecessarily. What is your telephone number?"

He lifted the receiver and repeated the number to the switchboard operator. He waited a moment, tugging negligently at his left ear-lobe, and then said: "Mrs. Jenson? I'm calling for Mr. Rowan and... ."

He stopped abruptly and his visitors could hear excited words crackling in the receiver. His face tightened and he said peremptorily: "I understand, Mrs. Jenson. Listen carefully. This is the police. Don't touch anything until we get there. Nothing at all."
He broke the connection and gave another number before turning to meet Charles Rowan’s frightened and enquiring gaze. His gaunt face was seamed and his gray eyes were bleak, but his voice was curiously gentle as he said:

"Your wife has returned, Rowan. Mrs. Jenson just came downstairs and stumbled over her body in the hallway. She's been murdered."

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**Alibi For Two**

*Charles Rowan* had half-risen, and at Shayne’s blunt words his face went flaccid and he sank back, covering his face with both hands.

"Murdered?" Melzner leaped forward to grab Shayne’s arm, but the detective shook him off, barking into the mouthpiece: "Get me Chief Gentry." Over his shoulder, he said curtly, "Strangled to death. Give me the dope on Ted Dinker."

Turning back to the phone, he said: "Will? Mike Shayne. Mrs. Charles Rowan has been murdered at..." He looked enquiringly at Melzner and repeated the street address as the young man gave it.

"Strangled in her own house within the last hour according to my information," he continued to the Miami Chief of Police. "She stayed out all night, presumably with a man named Ted Dinker, whom you’d better locate at once."

He paused again while Melzner swiftly gave him a description of Dinker and the name of his downtown hotel. Relaying this information to Chief Gentry, Shayne added: "Bring Dinker out to the death scene right away. I’ll meet you there with the victim’s husband and brother and we’ll try to add things up."
He hung up and turned to face his two stricken visitors, saying harshly: "I know it’s tough, Rowan. But we can’t do anything for your wife now except get the man who strangled her. Pull yourself together and help me."

Rowan gulped back his tears and exclaimed: "It must have been that man. Ted Dinker. They must have returned soon after I drove away with Herbert and he forced his way in when she unlocked the front door. Perhaps she had told him she had no large amount of ready cash and he strangled her in frustrated rage."

"Perhaps," agreed Shayne. "But it might have been a servant. Or a prowler who entered after you left the house and was surprised by her when she returned."

"Impossible. Mrs. Jenson is the only servant who sleeps in, and she’s quite elderly and feeble. All the windows have burglar alarms, and the rear and side doors were securely bolted on the inside. No, Mr. Shayne. She must have allowed that man to enter with her, and he..." His voice trailed off into sobbing grief.

Shayne turned to Melzner who had crossed the room and was helping himself to whiskey from a decanter. "You spoke of a joint trust fund, Melzner. The police are going to want to know who inherits her share."

"Why... I suppose I will. That is... it’s fixed so the entire fund goes to the survivor. Why will the police want to know about that?"

"What did you quarrel with your sister about?"

"Money," said Melzner sulkily. "We could touch only the income from the trust fund, and Grace never spent her share. Charles didn’t allow her to. But would she give me any when I needed cash? Not a red cent." His voice was aggrieved as he tossed off a glass of whiskey.

"Now you’ll have her income also," said Shayne thoughtfully.

"What of it?" Melzner’s face was ugly. "Do you think...?"

"Can you prove your sister didn’t come to your house last night?"

Charles Rowan started up from his chair and exclaimed: "You can’t possibly suspect Herbert, Mr. Shayne. Even though he is heavily in debt and was always quarrelling with Grace."

He paused, biting his underlip worriedly as though a new thought had come to him, but went on doggedly: "You can’t possibly suspect him. I can give him a perfect alibi. You see, we’ve been together every instant since he picked me up in front of my house, and it must have happened after that because Grace wasn’t even home at that time."

Shayne shrugged and said, "I just like to get everything straight. I’ll dress and we’ll get out there to see what Dinker has to say for himself."
**Someone is Lying**

**THE ROWAN** residence was an imposing three-story stucco house set well back in an expanse of green lawn on a quiet, palm-shaded street. A police car drew up at the curb immediately behind Shayne as he parked, and Chief Will Gentry got out of the back seat with a pallid-faced and frightened young man who was securely handcuffed to the wrist of a uniformed policeman.

"That's Dinker," Charles Rowan exclaimed when he saw the prisoner. He started forward angrily but Shayne shouldered him back and asked the chief:

"What does he say about this, Will?"

Chief Gentry was a stolid man. He pushed the wide brim of a Panama back from his florid face and said, "My men picked him up just as he was driving into the hotel garage. But he claims to have a perfect alibi for the last couple of hours. We haven't checked yet, but he says he's been drinking coffee in a place where he's known since dropping Mrs. Rowan here at five-thirty."

"That's an absolute lie." Rowan surged forward against Shayne's long arm. "I sat up until six-thirty waiting for her and she hadn't returned then. You admit you were with my wife last night. You must have murdered her."

Ted Dinker shrank back from the angry husband and admitted defensively: "We did go for a boat-ride on the bay. Nothing wrong in that. Had engine trouble or we'd been back by midnight. I don't know what this is about murder," he went on nervously. "I sat right here in my car at five-thirty and watched her go in the front door and she was okay then."

"The man is lying, of course," said Herbert Melzner to Shayne and Gentry. "It's perfectly obvious that he hung around here until he saw Charles drive away with me at six-thirty, and then slipped inside with her and strangled her in the hallway."

"It's perfectly obvious that someone is lying," Shayne agreed grimly. "Let's go in and see what we can find out."

The six men went up the walk together, and Michael Shayne stopped abruptly when they were ten feet from the closed front door. He pointed a big forefinger and said with satisfaction:

"Now we know which one of you is lying. He's your murderer, Will."
IMPORTANT

THE SOLUTION to the Mystery Puzzle of the Month is on the final page.

DO NOT check the Solution until you finish the enclosed interlocking puzzle which holds the missing clue.

After completing the interlocking puzzle you should know who is THE GUILTY ONE.

Then CHECK the Solution which is stated in “mirror-type.” Hold the final page to a mirror and read the correct Solution.

The Solution

CHIEF WILLY CENRY followed his hunching forward to the morning newspaper and folded it neatly inside with a slip of paper saying “WILL the moon?”

 Cheryl Rowan smiled, put a letter to design on her hat, and off she floated Papier surrounded by her friends. She knew her was equally puzzle for the week to come, but this was a lot of fun. She raised a slip of paper to the air and the crowd of people in the Risomun read the first clue:

"Rowan has been my cooking partner for over twenty years and has been a great partner. He always stands up and pulls over and brings..."
MYSTERY PUZZLE
OF THE MONTH

TO SOLVE:—

1—READ enclosed mystery story.

2—DO interlocking puzzle.

The clues in the story, plus the clue in the interlocking puzzle, give you the same clues as our detective has—from this you should be able to solve the mystery puzzle.

3—CHECK your solution.

Hold the final page of the mystery story to the mirror — the "mirror-type" holds the solution.

Can you SOLVE this MYSTERY PUZZLE?

MYSTERY PUZZLES of the MONTH already released:

1) DATE-LINE FOR DOOM
   by Brett Halliday

2) CASE OF THE DUPLICATE DOOR
   by Helen McCloy

3) PICTURES DON'T LIE
   by Clayton Rauson

4) CASE OF THE LONELY HEART
   by Kelley Roos

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