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A Complete Novel

THE FIFTH GRAVE 4

By JONATHAN LATIMER

When his partner is killed trying to rescue a rich man's daughter from the meshes of a weird fanatical cult, private detective Karl Craven takes on the job—to find himself facing a relentless gang of killers who slay in the name of their prophet.

Short Stories

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By MARGERY ALLINGHAM

To Scotland Yard, the murder of financier Robert Fenderson appears to have been accomplished by magic, but able Albert Campion proves that there is no such thing.

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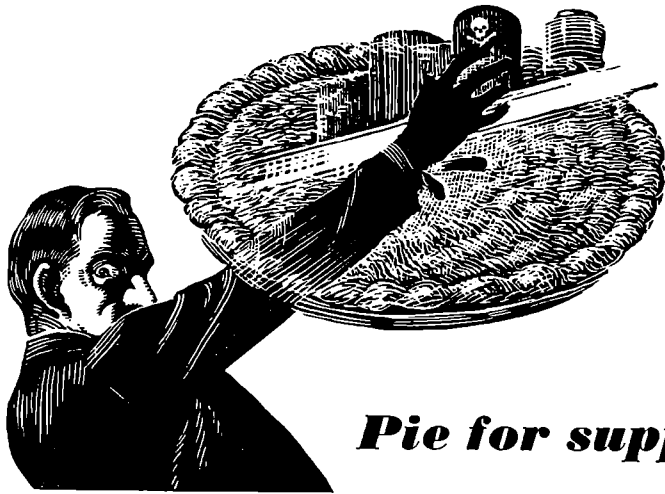
By MARGARET ST. CLAIR

Dora Morris confesses to an illicit love when she finds her husband spooning arsenic—to learn that she is a woman scorned by the man she had felt free to betray.

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Pie for supper

CLYDE MORRIS looked doubtfully at the package of arsenic for a moment and then began to lever at its top. His forehead might have been noble except for his perpetual frown; he had a hulking, hobbledehoy body and a mouth which managed to be at once small, curly and thin.

He put the lid down on his work table and sniffed absently at the arsenic before he measured out a spoonful of it into a glass. The salt had become rather caked; he had to rap the package smartly against the table top to jar enough loose for the second spoonful. Then he added water from the tap and began to stir.

There was a light, sharp step overhead.

"Clyde!" a woman's voice called. "Clyde! Where are you? Clyde!"

Clyde Morris pushed the package of arsenic back a little from the

edge of the table and stood perfectly still. His face had gone blank. He was breathing very quietly, but he still frowned.

"Clyde!" The voice was more insistent, beginning to be edged "Where *are* you, anyhow?"

Silence. The steps came closer. Silence. The door at the head of the stairs opened.

"Clyde! Why, there you are. Why didn't you answer when I called?"

She ran down the steps toward him, her high heels clicking on the wood, then ringing more sharply against the basement's concrete floor. She was blond, faded, prettyish.

"Why on earth didn't you answer? What are you doing? Am I disturbing you?" She was standing across the work table from him now.

Clyde Morris looked down at the glass, the spoon, the package of

Arsenic a la mode BY MARGARET ST. CLAIR

arsenic. The nerve over his right eye had begun to twitch.

Dora Morris followed the direction of his gaze. She picked up the package and read the label on it.

"Oh," she said.

She pulled a linen handkerchief out of the sleeve of her black crepe dress and scrubbed at her cheek with it. Her eyes had gone round and dim.

"Oh," she said again. "I didn't know you knew. I didn't think you'd take it that way . . . Say something, Clyde, please."

"I don't know anything to say."

"But—I mean—I want you to know—" she ran her tongue over her lips. "Listen, Clyde. Bert and I had the affair because . . . I wasn't ever in love with him! I've felt bad over it ever since it began.

"Only you didn't—you didn't seem to like me any more or care about me, and I was lonesome. And Bert seemed to like to listen to me talk and take me to the movies and things. I guess I felt I owed it to him, in a way. What made you suspect us, though? We tried to be awfully careful because I didn't want to make you feel bad."

Clyde Morris made no answer. He had picked up the lid and fitted it over the arsenic tin. Now he turned his back on his wife and stretched up to put the package on one of the shelves behind his work table.

"Was it the note he sent me last night?" Dora went on. "I thought the flap looked awfully loose. Or was it— Well, I don't suppose it matters, really. Clyde . . ."

She stepped up to him and rather timidly laid her hand on his arm.

His head was lowered. He did not look at her; neither did he draw away.

"Clyde! Oh, if I'd known you felt this way about me—" she made a tiny gesture toward the tablespoon and the glass "—it wouldn't have happened at all. I misjudged you. I thought you were self-centered and cold."

She cleared her throat.

"Now that I know I was wrong, couldn't we—just forget about Bert and go back to being happy together again? I know we're old married folks, but couldn't we have a—a—sort of second honeymoon?"

Her cheeks had grown pink. A smile trembled on her lips. Her eyes were moist and warm.

Clyde Morris found his voice at last.

"You're talking like a fool, Dora," he said. He was enunciating every syllable with great clarity in his precise, rather high voice. "I didn't know you were carrying on an affair with Bert Weaver, and if I had, I'd have been grateful to him. I feel I owe him a vote of thanks for taking an unpleasant duty off my shoulders. What did you think I was doing with the arsenic?"

Dora Morris was looking at him with a kind of gasping incredulity. Her hands, against her breast, had drawn her handkerchief into a long line.

"I—" she said, and stopped.

"From what you said, you have some sort of notion that I meant to poison you, or Bert, or myself," Clyde Morris continued. "I'm not sure which you think, and I don't suppose you know yourself."

"What ails you women's minds, anyhow? Do you think I care enough about you to commit murder, or kill myself, for your sake? Can't you see that all I want is a quiet life? Murder? Suicide? For God's sake! It's nearly as bad as Muriel wanting me to divorce you so I can marry her."

"Muriel? You mean you've had an affair with *her*?" Dora had turned brick-red.

"Call it that if you like," Clyde said. "It was her idea." He reached down under his workbench and came up with a metal spray gun. He unscrewed the cap on its tank and poured the arsenic solution from the glass into it.

"What makes you think I'd want a second honeymoon with you?" he went on more calmly. "My chief recollection of the first one is of you with your head on one side, like a half-witted canary, talking baby talk. As for the arsenic, if you'd pay some attention to the garden, you'd know the rose beetles have been after the tree roses for weeks." He screwed the cap back on the spray-gun's tank, his lips a thin line.

"And now," he said, "I'm going out and spray my roses."

He went up the basement stairs.

Dora Morris remained standing by the work table. Her first fiery flush had given place to a peeled-almond white. She seemed to have lost stature since her husband had left, to have shrunken together. Almost half an hour passed before she roused herself.

It was time to be thinking about getting dinner. She went over to the north wall of the basement, where the shelves for canned fruit were, and got down a quart jar of the sour pie cherries she had put up last year.

She looked in the direction where Clyde had disappeared, and nodded twice. Then she went back to the workbench and, standing on tiptoe, got the package of arsenic down from the shelf where Clyde had put it. She read the label carefully.

Carrying the jar of fruit in her left hand and the arsenic in her right, she started up the stairs for the kitchen. Her face was still colorless, but her lips wore a slight, unpleasant smile.

Clyde had always liked her pies.

