The Desert Moon Mystery

CHAPTER I

The Cannezianos

I knew, that evening in April, when Sam got home from Rattail and came stamping snow into my kitchen, his good old red, white and blue face stretched long and wide in its usual grin, that he had brought some bad

"I had a letter today," he said,

"from 'he Canneziano twins." I am like a lot of folks who say that they are not superstitious, who just bappen to think that it is bad luck to walk under a ladder. More than likely the shivery, creepy sensation I felt. when Sam said that, was due to the cold he brought in with him, and was not due to the fact that those words of his were the forerunners for all of the grim mysteries and the tragthat made the Desert Moon ranch, before the end of July, a place

"How much do they want?" I ques-Moned.

"No, Mary; they want to come here to live. Danielle wrote the letter. She says they want to come here and rest, indefinitely. She says she longs for it with all her soul, or something

"Danielie," I said, "always was the best of the two. You going to let them come, Sam?"

"Anything else for me to do?" "Not a thing-for you. There'd be plenty of others. Those girls are no kin of yours. Let me see—eight

years old when they were here in 1909, makes them twenty-four years old now, according to my figures. Why a couple of women twins, aggregating forty-eight years, should decide to come here and rest their souls, at your expense, is beyond me." "I have plenty."

"So has Henry Ford. Why don't they go rest their souls with him? They've got as much claim on him as they have on you. None. Leave those girls rest their souls right there where they are, Sam."

"No-I don't know, Mary. I guess I'll write them a letter and tell them to come along. Lots of room."

I didn't argue any more about it For twenty-five years I had been housekeeper of the Desert Moon ranchhouse, and I had learned, during that time, that there was only one subject, concerning Sam, or the place on which I could never hope to have any say-so. Trying to argue with Sam about anything that had to do in any way, with Margarita Ditsie, when she was Margarita Ditsie Stanley, or when she was Margarita Ditsie Canneziano, was about as sensible as hoisting a chiffon parasol for protection in the midst of one of our Nevada mountain cloudbursts.

Margarita Ditsie was of French-Canadian parentage; a dark-haired, big-eyed beauty. Her father kept a gambling hole in Esmeralda county in the early days. Her mother had run away from a convent, after she had become a nun, to marry him. The girl had some of the nun, some of the runaway, and some of the gambling house proprietor in her. It made a queer combination.

Trooper, over on the Three Bars ranch, about sixty miles from here. Sam met her there. She and Sam were married two weeks later. She was a lot younger than Sam: but. even then, he was the richest man in the valley, with every unwedded woman for a hundred miles around setting her cap for him.

Whether Margarita married him for his wealth, or whether it was to spite the other girls who would have liked to marry him, I don't know. All I know is that Margarita never had a mite of love for him. She staved with him, though, and acted decently enough for two years, until Dan Canneziano came to the ranch and got a job on It as a cowpuncher.

It was during those two years that Sam built this ranchhouse for her. Sam's lend and silver mine had just come in, and there was not anything from Italian marble fireplaces to teak wood floors, that was too grand for what Margarita called the Stanley mansion. She left it, all the elegance and the luxury, and she broke her marriage vows, for love of this wor cowpuncher. That, I guess, is fair and full enough description of Margarita Canneziano.

I don't blame her. I quit blaming folks for things a good many years ago when, after firing three Cl cooks in six weeks, I decided that, if we were to live healthy and whole some. I'd have to take over the job of cooking as well as housekeeping for the Desert Moon ranch, and set about it, and learned to cook. In other words, when I became a creator myself, I got to know creations and so

quit blaming all of them. If I forget to put the soda in the milk pancakers, it isn't their fault if they don't rise. They are as made them. Margarita was as the Lord made her. He, I suppose, either had His own good reasons for turning out such a mess, or else He was tired or flustered, or maybe, was just experi menting on the road to something better when He did It.

I should explain, I suppose, wish ing to be as honest as possible in spite of the fact that I am writing a mystery story, that Canneziano had a good education; he talked poetry, and played the violin. Margarita heard ters one day, and had Sam invite him up to the house to play. She accom Sam had bought for her.

Before long, Dan Canneziano was spending a good part of his time at the ranchhouse. Sam, being nobody's fool, soon saw how the land lay; but he, according to his custom then and now, kept his mouth shut and his eyes open. Sure enough, one evening they tried to elope together. went after them and brought them back. The three of them had about half an hour's talk together. Then Sam herded ('anneziano down to the outfit's quarters and, I suppose, told he stayed until Sam was ready for him again.

The next morning Sam started to the county seat. He reached there that evening. The following morning he got his divorce. He came back to the Desert Moon on the third morning, with his divorce and with a preacher He sent for Canneziano, and stood by while the preacher married Margarita Stanley to Daniel Canneziano, decent and regular, according to the laws of

There it should have ended. It didn't, because Sam never got over oving Margarita. So when, nine years later, she came back to the Desert Moon, with twin girls, Danielle and Gabrielle, and said that Canneziano had deserted her and the children Sam took them all right in. I don't know, yet, whether or not they took him in.

Certainly he did not show much surprise when, in about ten days, Canneziano put in an appearance Sam allowed him to get a good start with his threats, and then he took him across his knees and gave him a sound spanking, and passed him over to Margarita to dry his tears, and washed his own hands and went

That evening he had one of the men hitch up and take the whole kit and caboodle of Cannezianos to Rattail in time to catch the east-bound train. I am ashamed to say that Sam gave them money. I don't know how much. A tidy sum, I'll be bound, for shortly after we beard that Canneziano had opened the finest gambling house south of the Mason and Dixon line, in New Orleans.

Sam wanted to keep the children. He offered to adopt them. Margarita would not consider it.

When Margarita died, in France, seven years after she had paid us her blackmailing visit, Sam, the ninny, wrote to Canneziano and again offered to adopt the girls and give them a good home on the Desert Moon. He got a few insulting, insinuating lines for an answer. Canneziano had his own plans for his daughters, who had developed into rare beauties.

But, if Sam was soft with the wom en, he was not soft with Canneziano. He had showed up here, beaming and broke, about three years ago. He had left, suddenly, after having seen Sam and no one else, less beaming but quite as broke as he had been when he had come. I thought, maybe, Sam was forgetting that side of the family, and that this might be a When she was eighteen years old good time to remind him.

later, too, and rest?" I asked.

"Just at present he is in San Quentin, serving a three years' term. His term's up this summer. Poor little girls," Sam went on, "I reckon we haven't any idea of what they've been through, all these years."

"I reckon not," I agreed. "But they aren't little girls any more. Seems queer to me, with all the beauty their father was bragging about, neither of them has married. Twenty-four is getting along."

"I'll bet," Sam answered, "it is because they have never had any decen opportunities. Considering the life that they've had to lead, and all, I think it speaks pretty well for then that they have come through straight and clean."

Instead of asking him how he knew that, I said, "You'd be willing, then,

to have John marry one of them?" John, Sam's adopted son, was the apple of Sam's eye. He would have the ranch, and Sam's fortune, other dependents provided for, when Sam died. Whether or not the girl he married would be contented to live on the ranch, and help John carry it on and keep up its traditions, making it one of the proudest spots in Nevada, was a nighty important thing to Sam.

He waited so long before answering my question that I was sure I had hit the nail on the head.

"John," he finally said, "is old enough to take care of himself." With that he turned and went out of my titchen, not giving me a chance to ay that, though I had lived through fifty-six years, I had never jet seen a man at the age he had just men tioned. I knew that if these ('an neziano girls came to the Desert Moon, they would bring trouble with them. I was right. A merciful Provi dence be thanked that, for a time at least, the knowledge of how ter-

ribly right I was, was spared me. I am not an adnirer of men. Lookng at most any man. I find myself thinking what a pity it was he had to grow up, since as a little, helples hild he would have made a complete

Sam Stanley is different. There is him playing, down in the outfit's quar- there is, I think, in any good man or and don't work evenings.

by Kay Cleaver Strahan

by Doubleday Doran Co., Inc. WNU Service

woman-a little seasoning of simplicity, really, is all it amounts tobut there is a quality about Sam that makes a person feel that he set out, early in life, to follow the recipe for being a man, and that he has made a thorough job of it.

Why he, as a young man, with a pretty fair education and a tidy sum of money left him by his father, who had been a well-thought-of lawyer in Massachusetts, should come out here to Nevada, take up his homestead land, and settle content for the rest of his life, has always been more or less of a mystery to me, unless you take Sam's explanation of it.

He says that, when his father died. left him without a relative, whom he knew of, in the world. He was twenty years old, and he owned a set



He Left Suddenly After Having See Sam and No One Else.

of roving toes and an imagination. So he went to California, seeking romance and gold. Finding neither, he came down here to Nevada.

He staked out his hundred and sixty acres with Boulder creek tumbling and roaring through them. He built his cabin. He hired help, and built fences, and dug ditches, and planted crops, and bought stock. He bought more land. He hired more help, dug more ditches, planted bigger crops, bought more stock. He has been doing that regularly ever since. And, of course, he located the lead and silver mine, on his property, that made before it played out. But, in spite of the money that "Old Lady Luck," as he called his mine, made for him, Sam never gave his heart to it. It was the Desert Moon ranch that he oved, and the money he made from it that he was proud of. That was why, when the honor of the ranch went under, during those terrible weeks last summer, Sam all but went under

After Margarita left the place from her visit of 1909, taking the twins with her, Sam went around for a week or two, with his head cocked to one side as if he was listening for something. I knew what he was missing, and I was not surprised when, one day, he told me he had decided couple of children and adopt them.

Francisco and got in touch with a trained nurse who would be willing to come up and live on the ranch and take care of the two children. He had her go to an orphan's home and select the children and bring them with her when she came.

The nurse came early in Septemwith two brown-eyed children named Vera and Alvia. Sam at once re-named them. John, he said, was only name for a boy, and Mary the only name for a girl. But since my name was Mary, he would let the little girl have Martha, which meant. according to Sam, "Boss of the

The nurse's name was Mrs. Ollie Ricker. I don't know how old she was then. I don't know how old she is now. She never talked. I do not mean that she never chatted, or gos siped. I mean that she never said one word if she could possibly avoid At the end of sixteen years of daily association with Mrs. Ricker. that is, up to the time of the second murder on the Desert Moon, I knew exactly as much about her past life as you know at this minute.

John, at that time, was nine years old. He was as bright, and as up standing, and as handsome, as any little fellow to be found anywhere. I may as well say, now, that this description of John, at nine years old. is as good a description as I can give of John at twenty-five, if you will draw his beight up to six feet, and

put on weight accordingly. The papers from the orphanage gave Martha's age as five years; but even I, who knew less about children than it was decent for any woman to know, soon saw that something was wrong. She walked well enough, but she could scarcely talk at all. Her ways and her habits were those of a two-year-old infant, yet she was far large for that age. Before she had been with us a week I knew that Martha was not quite right in her

Mrs. Ricker knew it, too. Her excuse was, that she had chosen Martha because she was so pretty; that she had had no opportunity to judge her other characteristics. She insisted that she thought, with proper care. Martha would develop normally.

I knew better. Sam knew it, too. But, when I begged and besought him not to adopt her, he brought out an argument good and conclusive for him. "If I don't adopt her, and take care of her," said Sam, "who the heck

would?" So adopt her he did. And he spent a small fortune on doctors, specialists, for her. None of them could do any thing. It was, they said, a hopeless case of retarded development. So, at

twenty-one years of age, Martha though the care and doctoring had given her a fine healthy body, had the mind of a child of five or six yearsnot too bright a child, either. That was at best. At worst-Well, no mat-Entirely harmless, the doctors said; but I always had my doubts.

CHAPTER II

Arrivals at the Ranch

It was three years after Mrs. Ricker ame to the ranch, bringing John and Martha, that Hubert Hand put in his appearance. He had got Mr. Indian Chat Chin, as everybody called him, to bring him up from Rattail in his old surrey.

Mr. Indian Chat Chin stopped his old nag at the entrance to the driveway, and Hubert Hand climbed carefully down and came up the road swinging a walking cane like he was leading a parade.

Sam and I, as was our custom, went walking down to meet him.

Phrase "Stone Age" Not Literal in Application

stage in the development of human culture as defined by the materials to the Stone age produced objects of used by man for weapons, utensils, etc. The phrase is somewhat misleading, since it is probable that primitive man made use of wood and other perishable materials to a far greater extent than of stone, and consequently the stage is defined by the prevailing material of the relics, not by that of actual implements in common use. The term "Stone age" represents in no sense a chronological division of human progress, but is a loose equivalent for a stage of cultural development varying widely in duration in different parts of the world. There are, e. g. tribes still in the Stone age, while, on the other hand, some groups had out-

Recipe for a Perfect Day A day is just as perfect as you want te make it. Helen Christine Bennett gives a perfect day decalogue in an

article for the Physical Culture Mag-

She writes: "1. I wake up, Stretch. 2. Get a cheerful frame of mind. 3 Drink a glass of cool water. 4. Take ten minutes setting-up exercises. 5 Take a shower-warm, then cool. 6 Don't eat too much breakfast. 7. Re fuse to rush. 8. Walk part way to work. 9. Don't worry while in your some of the child left in Sam, just as office. 10. Rest before your dinner

The Stone age is a term commonly | grown it before the dawn of history. used to denote the earliest recognized It is also worth noting that some tribes commonly classed as belonging a superior artistic and industrial merit to those who had advanced to the use of metals. The evidence for the existence of such an age in most parts of the world is conclusive, but it is from the prevalence and character of the relics in certain parts of Europe rather than in America that the idea and term have come into general use.

Famous Song Not Burns' Although the words of the song "Auld Lang Syne" appear in Burns' works, he himself, admits that he wrote only the second and third stanzas. A song of the same title can be traced to the latter part of 1600. In letter to George Thomson, Septemoer, 1793, Burns says "One song more have done, 'Auld Lang Syne.' The air is but mediocre but the following song, the old song of the olden times, and which has never been in print nor even in manuscript until I took it down from an old man's singing, is enough to recommend any air.'

Mark of Gentleman ing with just ordinary human beings like ourselves. Let's treat them just like we would want them to treat us. Consideration for others is the distingu'shing trait of the gentleman .-P. S. &rkwright.

We are just men and women deal

"Nobody ever mistook me for a fairy before," Sam said. "But go ahead. Your first wish is granted.

What are the other two?" Hubert Hand got out his card then. Besides his name it had "Clover-blossom Creamery," and the San Francisco address printed on it. Hubert Hand explained that he had

this ranch."

an up-and coming creamery business in San Francisco, but that his physician had told him that he had to live in a high, dry climate with plenty of sunshine and no fog. He had, after inquiries and investigations, decided that the Desert Moon ranch, altitude seven thousand feet, sunshine three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, to say nothing of the marvelous view of the Garnet mountains, the hunting, the fishing, and the pure snow water, would fill all his requirements.

His proposition was that he start a reamery, on the Desert Moon ranch, and supply the valley with ice cream, butter, and other dairy products. Sam and the ranch, the cows, the big ice plant. Mr. Hubert Hand had the knowledge and the equipment. They could divide the profits.

Next to sheep men, I guess there s nothing that cow men hold in ower contempt than they hold dairy farms. Sam was too much disgusted to swear very long.

"Listen, stranger," he said. "I wouldn't turn the Desert Moon into a lace to slop milk around in if the entire valley had to depend on Hong-kong, China, for its ice cream cones. Forget it, and come in now and have some supper."

To my knowledge, Hubert Hand, from that day to this, has never again mentioned, on the Desert Moon, anything that had to do with creameries Neither, from that day to this, has he been off the ranch for more than a couple of weeks at a time.

"By the way," he began, trying to make it sound unimportant, when we had finished supper, "I heard, in Telko, that you were something of a chess player." "I am, when I can get a game,"

Sam said. "But chess players, in these parts, are as scarce as hen's "I play a little," Hubert Hand produced, right modestly.

Sam jumped up and got out his Hubert Hand beat him the first game in about half an hour. They set up their men again. It took Hubert Hand

over an hour that time to beat Sam, but he did it. "Heck!" Sam said, at the end of that game. "You're hired." "Hired for what?"

Send for your trunk and name your struck by lightning-a co place, that you were a blankety blank countries farther west. crack chess player?" Hubert Hand accepted Sam's offer.

then and there. The next day he titled himself assistant ranch manager, and named his salary at two hundred and fifty dollars a month. kept right on managing the ranch. and everything on it, except, perhaps, myself, without any assistance, the same as he had always done.

Chadwick Caufield, the other member of our household, who was present on the Desert Moon ranch at the time of the first murder, came only two years ago last October.

He was wearing white corduroy trousers, a long vellow rubber raincoat, and a straw hat tethered to its buttonhole with a string. He was carrying a ukulele under his arm and a camera in his hand. He took off his hat, displaying a head full of pretty yellow curls. He smiled, displaying a sweet, gentle disposition, (If there is any better index to character than the way a person smiles, I have never found it.)

"How do you do?" he said. "I have

come to visit you." By the time Sam got his pipe picked up, John had got down the forty-feet length of living room and had Chad by both hands, and was introducing him as the friend he had told us about, the friend he had made at Mather's field, during the war. The way of that was, John had

saved his life for him down there, and had never since been able to get out from under the responsibility of it. John had found a job for him after the armistice, and when Chad lost it, John had loaned him money to start out in a vaudeville act. He did fine with that for three years, and was making good money, when he got into an automobile accident in Kansas City and was laid up for months in the hospital there. John had wired money to him, and had asked him to come for a visit to the Desert Moon, But, since he had had a standing invitation for years, and since he had sent no word that he was coming, John was as much surprised as any

of us that evening. Chad was a little, pindling fellow. Around Sam and John and Hubert Hand he looked about as Jainty and trifling as the garnish around the platter of the Thanksgiving turkey. He seemed kind of like that, too; like the extra bit of garnishing that makes life's platter prettier and nicer-abso-

lutely useless, maybe, but never cluttery.

Man Hooks Fish as

It Is Eating Bird

Garden.-Earl Ansell did not kill two birds with one stone but he has a recent accomplishment that rivals it. While fishing he landed a nine-inch trout which had a bird in its mouth, the wing of which was still protruding. The fish's appetite was sufficient to cause it to grab the worm before it had disposed of the bird, a small one which had not vet fully feathered out.

WIFE IS SILENCED BY COURT DECREE

Forbidden to Speak to Husband Seeking Divorce.

Des Moines, Iowa.-A wife's tongue was stilled by court order recently. The decree was meted out by Judge Lester L. Thompson, who decided that if Mrs. Josephine Hawkins had any more talking to do she must direct her emarks at somebody else besides her husband, Nelson Hawkins.

The order was issued by Judge Thompson on application of Mr. Hawkins who filed suit for divorce a short while before. Hawkins' counsel complained that Mrs. Hawkins had threatener her husband with death and had made abusive remarks that "shook" his nervous system.

The application asked that Mrs. Hawkins be restrained from speaking to the plaintiff or molesting him in other ways. Mrs. Hawkins was further ordered by the court to allow Haw kins to "pack his trunk in peace" with out interference from Mrs. Hawkins. Hawkins declared that he wanted to

leave the premises he and his wife occupied, and that she had prevented him from obtaining his belongings. In his divorce petition, Hawkins charges his wife with cruel and inhuman treatment.

Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins were married at Baltimore, Md., July 21, 1924, the divorce petition stated. Both have been residents of Des Moines for more than a year.

Storm Produces Miracle When Lightning Strikes

Budapest.—During a recent thunder-storm, lightning played havoc in a wayside calvary in O-Buda, a suburb of the city. The station representing Christ on the cross between the two thieves was struck. Although the figure of the unrepentant thief was smashed to fragments, the figure of Christ was unharmed, and the lamp burning perpetually beneath it re-

The incident, which is regarded as little short of a mirecle, is attracting crowds to the spot to search in the bushes for fragments of the smashed "For whatever you want to call it, figure. The finders are confident that except the slopping of milk around, they will be preserved from being pay. Why didn't you say, in the first form of death in Hungary than in

Rooster With Freak

Bill Upsets Thieves Canton, Ohio.-Four men made the mistake of stealing a young rooster

with a deformed bill. Sheriff Ed Gibson of Stark county was baffled by a series of chicken thefts until Ben Sterner, a farmer residing near Smoketown, reported that a rooster whose beak was twisted until the upper part formed a circle was among twelve stolen from his coop.

Deputies saw the missing fowl on meat stand here and learned James Merritt, thirty-one, had sold it to the dealer. With Merritt the deputies arrested Sherman Schilling, thirty-one and Jess and Delbert Deardorff. brothers, age twenty-one and seven-

The four men confessed.

Bedtime Tale—Bunny Bit Naughty Python

Lincoln, Neb.-When he was turned by mistake into a pen with rattlesnakes and a 15-foot python at the state fair here, a little white rabbit cowed the rattlers in one corner and then bit the python. Since he already had dined, the python overlooked the insult and the rabbit swaggered out of the cage into the hands of an astonished keeper.

Dog Goes to Jail With

Master; Escapes Fine Kansas City.-Arrested on a charge of driving while intoxicated, Pearl Couch was protected by his bull dog, be separated from his master. They occupied a cell together.

Appearing for trial without the aid of Prince, Couch was fined \$25, sentenced for 30 days on the municipal

Kills Giant Rattler

Lynchburg, Va.-Mrs. Lucy Stinnette recently killed a rattlesnake on Chestnut mountain, which had 23 rattles. She brought the rattles to Lynchburg as proof of the age of the

Uncle Saves Niece New York .- Her uncle, Lawrence Decker, twelve years old, saved the Ler skirts caught fire from the sparks of a bonfire.

YOU HAVE A DOCTOR'S WORD FOR THIS LAXATIVE



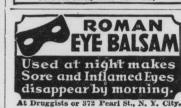
In 1875, an earnest young man practice medicine. family doctor, he saw the harm in harsh purgatives for constipation and began to search for something harmless to the sensitive bowels.

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