

The GOOSE WOMAN

by REX BEACH

FINAL INSTALLMENT

Synopsis: Amos Ethridge is found murdered in a country lane with a crude cross of twigs on his breast and a scented sheet of note paper in his pocket. He was the richest man in the state, with power and influence enough to make himself a candidate for governor. With his death came hints of an unsavory private life, of scandal that might come to light if the murder is investigated too closely. Mary Holmes, a former opera singer whose career was wrecked at the birth of her son, called "the goose woman" by newspaper reporters, lives nearest the scene of the crime on a small chicken farm where she ekes out a poor living and tries to find in drink the forgetfulness of past glories when she was Maria di Nardi, world-renowned opera singer. . . . Gerald Holmes, a talented young artist, is hated and loved by his mother who is embittered because his birth caused the loss of her voice and wrecked her operatic career. He has been befriended by the murdered Ethridge, and is engaged to another of Amos Ethridge's proteges, Hazel Woods, lovely and brilliant young actress. She has been helped to success by Ethridge. She lives in a small cottage owned by Ethridge. Jacob Riggs, eccentric old-time actor, now a doorman at the theatre where Hazel Woods plays, has appointed himself her guardian and lives in a room over her garage.

(Now Go On With the Story).

There was a chorus of assent and Mrs. Holmes read in the faces before her a unanimity of opinion that dismayed her.

"But I'll swear to it," she faltered.

"You've sworn to one story—"

Dimly the woman realized that the promptings of that mother love which had finally assumed shape within her, instead of saving her son had merely served to completely discredit her, and if anything to lessen her chance of assisting him. Again she experienced that wretched feeling of impotence, of frustration. With this feeling the animal in her came to life, blazed into fury.

"You—you fools! You idiots!" she stammered shrilly. "You're doing your best to make a murderess of me. And so is Vogel. But you shan't. He's my boy! I'm a bad woman. I've been a bad mother to him, but he's fine and clean and you shan't hurt him. He's a genius; he has my talents and his father's. It's not his fault that I'm a vain, selfish old— He didn't send me to the dogs! Publish my story, every word of it! D'you hear? It's the truth and I'll fight you. I'll fight Vogel. You shan't hurt him. You shan't! He's mine—mine." Her voice, which had risen steadily, cracked, became an incoherent cry of anguish. With her clenched fists she pounded weakly at the arms of her chair and her face was horribly distorted.

Efforts to calm her hysteria were futile. Somebody hurried for a glass of water. One of the attorneys drew Hazel aside and tried to tell her something, but she understood nothing of what he said, for her own agitation equaled that of Gerald's mother. She clung to the old doorman at her side, sobbing:

"Jacob! Jacob! It's too late. Nobody's going to believe her."

The confusion abated somewhat. A man was telephoning for the house doctor and the reporters were preparing to leave, when Jacob Riggs stepped forward and spoke to Mrs. Holmes.

"Don't take on so, Miz' Holmes. Jerry's innocent and I ain't going to let anything happen to him. I know how you feel. It's the same with me and Hazel. She was given to me as a daughter, and according to Ruth 'a daughter is better than seven sons.'" Miss Woods turned her tear-stained face towards the speaker; men who were leaving paused to listen.

"The Lord struck down Amos Ethridge, for he was an evil-doer and he delighted in his wickedness. But Jerry wasn't His instrument. He used Jacob, the son of Isaac. Ethridge was a prince of the country like Shechem, the son of Hamor. He saw Jacob's daughter and he took her and his soul gave unto her. The Bible tells you what Jacob done. Jacob slew him and the Lord was pleased and He told Jacob to arise and go up to—some where and build an altar. If Vogel and the policemen had read their Bibles they'd know who killed Amos Ethridge, the son of Hamor, for it's all written down. The proof's there. They can't blame Jerry."

"What are you talking about?" Hazel inquired sharply.

"I'm Jacob!" The old man's answer was broadcast to all his listeners. A peculiar resonance crept into his voice as he quoted: "Break thou the arm of the evil man! He wrought folly in lying with Jacob's daughter and I slew him—"

"Jacob!" the girl wailed. She hid

her face, in her trembling hands, for now she understood. To think that even he believed her guilty!

The others were slower, but they, too, finally grasped what it was the old doorman was trying to tell them. They shot questions at him; they scribbled down his answers. Some one dashed to the telephone and put in a call for Vogel. Mary Holmes strained her lips were moving, her eyes were forward, clutching at Jacob's arm; riveted upon his face.

Stripped of his garbled Biblical quotations, the old fellow's story was simple and easy to follow, and it bespoke a mind deranged but not wholly unhinged—the mind of a religious fanatic. Not one of his hearers doubted the truth of his words.

He loved Hazel and he had mistrusted Ethridge; he had moved out to her house in order to watch over her. What he saw had awakened in him a great anger, but he could not make up his mind what to do about it until inspiration came from his reading. He was Jacob, and Jacob, so he read, slew the son of Hamor for the same sin that Ethridge had done. As a mark of approval, God had revealed himself to the slayer and had made him great. Once the doorman had realized that this was a divine command, peace came to his soul and he calmly prepared to obey. He bought a revolver—Jacob told where and when—and on the Thursday night Ethridge had called on Hazel he took the trolley, rode to the end of the line, and laid in wait at a spot where nothing could intervene to prevent him from doing the will of God. But he wore no robe and no disguise. When he had killed Ethridge he laid a cross upon the body and prayed over it, then he trudged all the way back to town—the electric cars had ceased running by that time. At the first bridge on the way back he had dropped his revolver into the stream. Jacob described the exact spot and said the weapon could easily be recovered.

That was about all. He voiced no regrets; on the contrary, he was genuinely exalted and it was plain that he anticipated no punishment whatever for having done God's bidding.

Vogel arrived in due time. He listened attentively to what was told him, then he questioned the old man searchingly. After a while he and Jerry's lawyer left, taking Jacob with them. The newspaper men had gone some time before.

Hazel would have followed them, for she reasoned that Jerry would soon be at liberty and would naturally come directly here, but Mrs. Holmes was wretchedly unstrung and implored her to remain, for a while at least. It was impossible to desert a woman so genuinely in need of assistance until she had time to pull herself together, so the girl stayed.

A really noticeable change had come over Gerald's mother. The process of voluntarily stripping bare her soul and exposing it to the light had served the purpose of cleansing it and purifying it to some extent. She showed it in her words, her actions, in the apprehension she displayed at the prospect of meeting her son. She wondered if he would be harsh with her. She made pitiful, fluttering attempts to better her appearance, but her recent ordeal had left her almost helpless and Hazel was compelled to do the work of her hands.

Jerry arrived before the girl could escape. Vogel, it seemed, was capable of cutting red tape when he felt like it. He entered the room, breathless, radiant. Without a word, except the one cry, "Mother!" he ran to Mary Holmes' chair and knelt beside it. Hungrily she put her arms about him, pressed him to her breast. Her face was glorified with an expression it had never worn before. Its grossness was burned away and in its place shone a suggestiveness at least of the beauty that had been Maria di Nardi's. She crooned over her boy, she patted and she petted him, stroked his hair and kissed it.

Hazel looked on through a mist of tears. She resisted blindly when, after a while, Jerry rose and took her hands in his.

"They told me how you stood by us," she heard him saying. "How you hired those lawyers for me and everything." He ran on with something more, something about demented old Jacob and the necessity of making sure that no punishment was visited upon him, but Hazel understood little because of the roaring in her ears.

Of course Jerry was grateful, she had expected nothing less. She assumed, however, that this meeting must be as distressing to him as to her, and she blamed herself for inflicting this unnecessary pain upon them.

Mary Holmes fathomed the cause of the girl's peculiar agitation and it indicated the change that had occurred in the older woman when she

forgot herself and her own concerns sufficiently to say:

"Jerry, dear, we owe everything to this child. She did as much for me as for you. And yet she wants to run away! If you can forgive me for what I've done you can surely forgive her."

"But he has n-nothing to forgive," sobbed the girl. "That's just it. You don't understand. Nobody understands. If I were guilty I'd deserve punishment but I'm not. They called me a scarlet woman; they preached sermons about me; they lied and slandered—and they didn't give me a chance to defend myself! Even old Jacob believed—!"

Jerry's voice rose above her heart-broken cry and its tone more than his words quieted her. "I never believed it. Why, if I had doubted you, for an instant, I don't think I'd have had the courage to endure what I went through."

"Honestly?"

The young man nodded. In a strange voice the girl cried:

"Then you've got to hear the real truth. Mr. Ethridge may have been a bad man, but he was good to me. Perhaps he had—ideas about me at first. I dare say he had, but he learned to know he and to respect me. He said he loved me; anyhow he asked me to marry him, and I can show you his letters to prove it. That wouldn't convince other people, but you know he wasn't the sort of man to marry a girl he couldn't respect. You know that don't you?"

"Yes. But even if it had been—otherwise, it wouldn't have made any great difference so long as you had learned to truly care for me. You taught me something about charity. You proved to me that nothing matters very much if two people really love each other."

Mrs. Holmes nodded vigorously. "Good boy, Jerry! I'm glad you're a man! She's a dear, foolish girl. She thinks she oughtn't to marry you—afraid she can't live this down. But, pshaw! Young people like you can live anything down. The world forgets. It forgot Maria di Nardi and it will forget the girl in the Ethridge case. Maybe it will even forget the 'goose woman,' if she behaves herself. She's going to behave herself. She's an old delerick and—But, for that matter, we're all three derelicks! Isn't it better for us to drift together than to drift apart? Certainly! Afraid she'll ruin your career! Humph! Why, she'll make it—"

The mother ceased speaking for she realized that neither Jerry nor Hazel were listening to her. They were standing close together and looking into each other's eyes; they were quite oblivious to her presence.

THE END

Goodyear Takes Lead In Its Field

"Goodyear's record of 'firsts' in the tire development fields needs no recounting here," Hubert Owens, manager of McDaniel Vulcanizing Works of this city, well known tire dealers, declared. "Motorists in our city are acquainted with the company's pioneer work in continually improving automobile, truck and farm tires, but are not so familiar with its work in other fields."

"In addition to the new tractor tire, the new double eagle airwheel and the new implement tire, Goodyear has this spring announced the first successful pneumatic brake for airplanes ever developed in the United States," he continued. "With construction underway on planes twice to three times as large as the 18,000 pound passenger airliners now in service, need for positive brakes is imperative. The new brake is an adaptation of the air-brake principle in use on buses, street cars and railway trains, refined for airplane use."

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Washington, June 1.—The majority leaders in congress are trying to speed things up so as to adjourn by June 6. The only two pieces of legislation which are labelled "must" are the new tax bill and the relief appropriation. And not all is clear sailing for either of them.

The outlook now is that the tax measure as it finally gets onto the statute books will amount to a net increase in corporation taxes of from 7 to 10 per cent. Not many members of either house will understand clearly just what the effect of the new law will be, and considerable doubt will be expressed as to whether it will raise the necessary additional revenue. However, it will be a stop-gap which may reduce the amount which the government will have to borrow to carry over the next fiscal year.

Relief and How
The relief appropriation has been complicated by the desire of many influential leaders in both houses to prescribe how future relief money shall be spent and by whom. Secretary Ickes would like to have the spending of it, and Mr. Ickes has worked himself into a very powerful political position.

Inside the administration, however, there is forming an anti-Ickes "bloc," and unless congress prescribes differently, a situation may develop in which neither Mr. Ickes nor his chief rival, Harry Hopkins, federal relief administrator, will have the final say. The talk is that Jesse Jones, chairman of the Reconstruction Finance corporation, has been picked by the president to be the boss of both Mr. Ickes and Mr. Hopkins in all future public works, relief and other emergency spendings.

Constitutional Amendment
The cancellation by the supreme court of the Guffey bituminous coal act has naturally revived discussion of the question of a constitutional amendment to give the federal government powers which it now does not have to regulate business and industry inside of state lines. While constitutional revision sentiment is running high, public expression in favor of it is being softened. The president and his supporters in and out of congress don't want to complicate the presidential campaign by bringing the constitution issue to the fore.

Labor Relations Act
The strongest demand for giving the federal government more power now seems to be centered in the ranks of organized labor. Labor leaders feel that the labor relations act will be declared unconstitutional when it reaches the supreme court, and the same apprehension seems likely to result in the abandonment by congress of the 30-hour week bill, the Ellenbogen bill for regulation of wages and hours in the textile industry and the Walsh-Healy bill which would give Washington complete control of hours and wages of all concerns having government contracts.

That a constitutional amendment may not be necessary to extend federal powers in case Mr. Roosevelt is re-elected is being pointed out by some observers. An alternative that is now being seriously discussed is the suggestion that congress could readily enact laws extending the

rights of trade and industrial associations to cooperate voluntarily for the mutual regulation of such questions as hours and wages of labor, apportionment of production, etc.

An example has been provided in the recent action of the railroads in getting together and reaching an agreement with their employees, in anticipation of the consolidation of all the railroads of the nation into a few great national systems. This consolidation has been the dream of far-seeing railroad men for years, and has been the particular hobby of Joseph C. Eastman, federal coordinator of railroads.

The Rail Problem
The principal obstacle in the way of the acceptance of Mr. Eastman's plan of railroad consolidations has been the problem of how to take care of the railroad employees who would be dropped from the payrolls, or shifted to other parts of the country.

The plan upon which the railroad companies and the railway labor brotherhoods have agreed provides for pensioning or else continuing for a long time on the payrolls of workers whose services would not be needed and for covering the moving expenses of those retained who would be shifted to points remote from their present homes. No new legislation was needed to arrive at this agreement, so the way now seems to be pretty well cleared toward a complete reorganization of the railways of the nation.

Pre-Convention Talk
The political picture, which still focuses chiefly upon the Republican National convention which meets at Cleveland next week, appears to be getting clearer. All of the signs point now to the nomination of Governor Alfred M. Landon by the Republicans on the second or third ballot. Estimates of his strength made by several different experienced political strategists are in substantial agreement. He will have 348 instructed delegates who will, of course, vote for him on the first ballot. There will be about 150 votes for "favorite sons" on this first ballot, most of whom, as well as a large percentage of the Knox and Borah delegates, are expected to swing to Landon on the second or third ballot.

On the Democratic side the most important event affecting the party's prospects is the declaration of Gov. Lehman of New York that he will not be a candidate for reelection. Mr. Roosevelt can conceivably be reelected without New York, but his friends are concerned over his prospects in his home state with anyone else than Mr. Lehman running for governor. Lehman has been the greatest vote-getter the Democrats have ever had in New York. With most voters voting the straight ticket, Gov. Lehman's popularity would help greatly to carry New York for the administration.

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