

knows something which will throw a little light on the case. It will surely be to our advantage if we can talk with her before she takes the witness stand and, although she lives in Houston, I think that we will profit by going to see her tonight. What do you think about it?"

All four seniors readily agreed to the plan and a long-distance call was made to Virginia Madison. Luckily she was at home and agreed to meet the five in Houston in three hours.

The drive to the city seemed endless and little conversation passed between the five throughout the hundred-mile journey. None of them with the exception of the Colonel, seemed to have any idea what benefit would come from their talk with the Madison girl. They weren't even very sure that Innocenti wasn't guilty. All the evidence pointed to him—maybe he did murder Keeton.

Woody indicated the feelings of all of them when he declared, "We'll do everything that we can to prove that Keeton wasn't murdered by another Aggie, but it looks almost hopeless."

Arriving at the Madison home, the boys were fairly dazzled by Virginia's beauty. "I'd almost commit a murder for that girl myself," Tommy said. Virginia's parents were there also, and seemed to be as anxious as their daughter to help in any way they could. As usual, Colonel Ashburn got down to business without wasting time.

"I know that this is unpleasant for you, Virginia, but we're sincerely interested in helping your friend Al who is in a pretty tight spot. Now tell me, if you will, which one of the two boys were you really interested in?"

It was easy to see that Virginia was on the verge of tears, but she came through with a real Spartan spirit and answered the Colonel.

"I always have been and still am in love with Al. Buster was sweet and I liked him a lot, but in a different way than I cared for Al. Buster knew it too," she went on, "and seemed to accept it as a fact which he couldn't change. The last time we saw each other—a week ago last Saturday night—we agreed that we would never meet again; at least, not without telling Al."

And thus it went—the Colonel asking question after question and Virginia answering them as best she could. It seemed as though he was making discouragingly little progress. Everything pointed in the same direction . . . Virginia loved Al and

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Buster had been clearly aware of it . . . The two had had a few dates without Al knowing anything about them . . . Finally, they had agreed to stop seeing each other for fear that the real romance between Virginia



There was nothing ingenious about Keeton's murder. Poison had done it.

and Al would be broken up if Al ever learned of the secret meetings the two had held. Then Buster was murdered, supposedly by Al after learning that his roommate had been dating his sweetheart.

Returning to College late that night, Colonel Ashburn admitted that they had failed to make as much progress as he had hoped for. "One thing bothers me," he said, "Why is it that the investigators are unable to determine exactly what Keeton ate which poisoned him? If we knew this we might be able to make a little headway in this case."

● The day of the trial dawned clear and cold. Everything still pointed to Innocenti's guilt. The courtroom of Bryan's Brazos County Courthouse was packed with cadets and civilians alike. Colonel Ashburn, Woody, Bodie, Doug, and Tommy had been unable to make any appreciable headway until the day before the trial at which time Woody had turned up a sensational piece of evidence which would be revealed at the trial.

Ten witnesses were to be called the first day after the jury was selected and the prosecuting and defense attorneys had made their introductory remarks. Virginia Madison and nine cadets were listed among the opening day's witnesses. The nine cadets included Bert Burns, assistant senior yell-leader; Mick Williams, a friend of Virginia Madison and a Cavalry senior; Leo Radford and George Castleberry, the cadets who found Keeton dead; and five of Innocenti's acquaintances whom the defense was calling as "character" witnesses: T. A. Arnold, "Rip" Barnhill, Ross Cox, Tom Hill, and Frank Daugherty.

It was almost time for the trial to begin, the courtroom was packed and noisy, everyone was anxiously awaiting the judge to enter and start proceedings, and then it happened.

It happened so fast that no one remembered exactly what did happen. Suddenly three masked gunmen, one of them with a sub-machine gun, entered the courtroom.

"Don't move, anyone!" the taller of the three warned. "If everyone here remains quiet and doesn't try any funny stuff no one will get hurt."

In the meantime the other two were forcing Virginia out of the courtroom. They worked quickly and smoothly. Nobody moved until the three, with Virginia, were out of the courtroom.

A car was waiting on the courthouse lawn which whisked the four away.

Virginia Madison—the star witness for the defense—had been kidnaped!

(To be concluded in December)