

### Crimson Friday

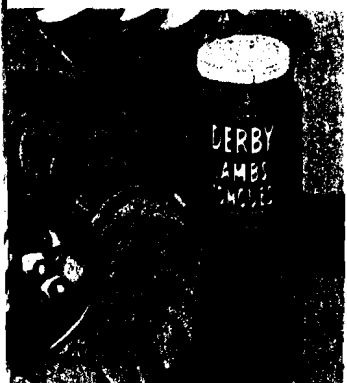
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**"Maybe I'll never drive a tank...but here's a tip on Feeding a Family!"**

"Morale begins in the kitchen, I say! The job done by your war workers depends a lot on the way you feed them. I plan plenty of treats and surprises with delicious ready-to-serve Derby Foods. They're so economical—not a morsel of waste—and so saving of fuel, time and effort. My tip is, insist on Derby quality for your family!"



**Egg Noodles and Chicken.** High egg content gives these noodles their fine flavor and golden color. Only tender, succulent young chicken meat goes into each jar. Packed in rich chicken fat and pure concentrated broth!



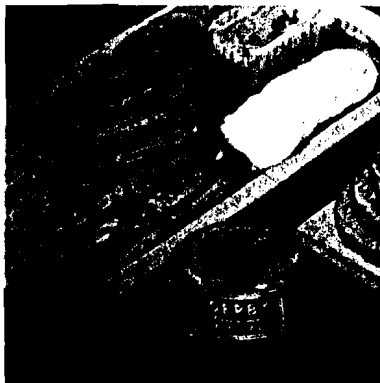
**Lamb's Tongues, tender and tongy.** Slow curing enhances the mild yet distinctive flavor of these whole Lamb's Tongues. Pre-cooked to an appetite-reasing turn! Pamper your folks with this delicacy... it's work-free, too... all ready to eat!



**Lunch Tongue, firm and flavorful.** A whole tongue, selected for its extra fine quality... made delicate and tender by Derby's special long-care process! It's downright thrifty—no shrinkage or waste parts. Handy—just chill, slice, serve!



**Meaty Tomatoes with Sauce.** Mildly seasoned but full-flavored for American taste! Deliciously made with more and better beef stock. Highest protein value, because of the generous meat content! They'll win you smiles, praise!



"Expose a hungry husband to Derby Boneless Chicken, Ox Tongue, Pig's Foot Tid-Bits and Vienna Sausage at different times. (He'll love you!)"

**Ready-to-serve DERBY FOODS**

Dept. WH-43, 3327 West 47th Place, Chicago, Illinois

I should have guessed that Harriet had a secret. It's been obvious enough."

At that, I suppose we might have guessed. In her self-appointed role as newsgatherer, Harriet Strings had long considered it her duty to meet practically all the local trains. Since Friday the town gossip had been bursting with importance but none of us had bothered with poor old Harriet. Yet Harriet had seen Ned Havens at the instant of his arrival.

"Harriet," said Aunt Mildred with some of her old vigor, "was all agog of course. She took it upon herself to welcome Ned back to Merristone and to insist that I'd love to see him. She made an appointment for me that morning with the man who used to be my husband. I saw Ned at her house late that night."

**MY MIND** was spinning but Friday night came back in all its dreadful clarity. I understood why Aunt Mildred had not been aroused when we returned from the scene of the murder, why she had been undisturbed by the crashing mirror. She had been closeted at the Strings ménage with the man who used to be her husband. But if those two had met late on Friday night, they met long after Hannah died.

"Hannah Wilson was dead when we met," Aunt Mildred said. "Dead for hours. Ned and I both knew of course. You remember that Selby came to the Strings' to phone for the police."

Fascinated and bewildered, I stared at the woman seated in the worn old leather chair. Aunt Mildred sat straight as a poker and only the trembling of her folded hands betrayed her. She was quite wonderful with her firm assumption that Ned Havens had needed to hear from Selby's lips the news that Hannah Wilson lay dead at the building site.

Aunt Mildred looked around. For the first time she became aware of the rifled Gladstone bag.

"What are you doing with Ned's things? Why isn't he here? I want to talk to him."

"You want to talk to him!" roared Belton. "So do we all. So do the police. He's run off."

"Oh no," said Aunt Mildred definitely. "Oh no. This time you are mistaken, Belton. If Ned had cared to run away, he'd have gone Friday night. We urged him to leave then. All of us."

"All of you!"

"Harriet and I. And Selby of course. Selby particularly. Selby thought then, and so did Ned and I—maybe because we wanted to think it—that Valerie Maple had killed her maid. That she alone was guilty." Aunt Mildred's voice fell imperceptibly, grew strong again. "On Friday night there still seemed to be a chance of keeping the family out of it. Maybe I'm a proud and selfish woman. Certainly I'm a mistaken one. I wanted that chance and Selby was—was fine and generous enough to want it for me. We hoped we could keep the—the old story dark. There was no chance at all if Ned went to the police."

"If Ned Havens had gone to the police on Friday, our case would have been concluded then and there. He'd have been arrested."

"Unquestionably. But, believe me, Belton, that would not have solved the mystery. Ned himself has no idea what has become of Valerie Maple."

"We all know what became of Hannah Wilson," Belton shouted. "She was murdered! We've got her body and I am convinced—"

"Control yourself, Belton," said Aunt Mildred. "Those rages are bad for a man of your age and weight and they don't help your thinking. Ned had nothing to

do with Hannah Wilson. He wasn't aware of the maid's existence until learned from Selby that she'd clubbed to death. But he has some theory of the mystery and—"

She broke off and turned at the sound of footsteps in the foyer. Al and Frank came into the library. Both men looked utterly exhausted.

"Ned Havens got away from us, said."

"I knew it!" cried Belton. "I knew all along. We've got to head him off."

"No," said Al, "no, the chase is over. Belton. Ned Havens has gone to the police station. Five minutes ago he was there and surrendered."

Aunt Mildred was absolutely speechless. She may have gone a little paler but was the only indication of what she had felt at the realization that all the efforts at concealment had been futile. Selby's sacrifice had accomplished nothing, that the old and ugly story of the past must come out.

Sarah uttered a short protesting cry and stood on her feet. Tears filled her eyes and, unashamed, she let them fall.

She said dully; "So it's finished. I've done with, then. I suppose my father must have confessed."

"I don't know, Sarah." Al dropped into a chair. "We saw him dash into the station and that's all. Sheriff Blaine turned us from the door."

"I knew," said Sarah, "knew in my heart that he was guilty. I don't blame him either. If my father killed that woman and hid her body, I'm glad. If he killed Hannah too, he was driven to it. Valerie Maple is responsible for everything that happened. Morally responsible, I mean."

She laughed hysterically.

"Hush, dear." As Frank crossed the room I saw his face. In that instant of helplessness and despair, Sarah was much more to him than I had dreamed. It was in his eyes, in the way he put his arms around her and drew her close.

"Believe your mother, dear. I believe that Ned Havens has been trying desperately to solve a mystery that himself can't fathom. And I'm sure I don't ask me why, but I am—that you'll know the truth."

Frank's words comforted Sarah. It had small effect on Belton. Perhaps he was remembering Ruth and what Selby's silence had cost his daughter, as he picked up the material evidence of Ned Havens' connection with Valerie Maple.

"The authorities will be waiting for these," said Belton.

"Why don't you carry them to the station now?" suggested Aunt Mildred. "You seem to have taken charge of the case."

**THE irony** did not affect him at all. Belton remarked that Sheriff Blaine would be engaged and gathered up an oddly assorted bundle and started immediately for Dr. Traphaven's. Selby continued her silent weeping against Frank's shoulder.

The rest of us, however, trailed outside, toward the house next door. Belton made straight toward his objective and Aunt Mildred stuck stubbornly at her heels as though she mistrusted his intentions as much as he mistrusted ours.

As we reached the sidewalk, Al passed and turned and glanced toward the huddle of the village business section. Most of Merristone had long since gone to bed. In the gloom the police station was a brilliant landmark, like a burning torch in an empty field. Lights blazed every window, cut a path across the deserted street. On the other side of the street a dim bulb glowed outside the undertaking parlors where Hannah Wilson's murdered body lay.

Suddenly Al's hand stiffened on

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