



"You may as well confess, sister! You were the only person anywhere near Farr at the time he was shot."

PAY FOR YOUR PEANUTS

By Tom Thursday

★ **Andy Dann was a rookie cop who had unorthodox ideas about the** ★
★ **way a police officer should treat the taxpayers. And, whether** ★
★ **the rest of the force liked it or not, Andy's methods paid off!** ★

HALF THE force disliked the rookie, Andy Dann. The others considered him quaint, a youngster who would soon fall into the groove with the rest of the force. For a cop, Andy had strange ideas. Among his novel

notions was one that all cops should pay the small fruit dealers for their apples and bananas. Especially Tony Romalli, the little peanut vendor two blocks from headquarters. Tony had a large family and a small income. Andy felt that Tony

and his ilk were also taxpayers and helped defray expenses of the department of police.

“That Dann mug gives me a pain!” said Sergeant Jake Sands, a veteran who hadn’t paid for either fruit or peanuts since the Battle of Bull Run. “It’s guys like him that makes it hard for the rest of us. Why shouldn’t we get a bite of fruit or a lousy bag of peanuts, free? When them guys are in trouble, who do they yell for? The cops, that’s who they yell for!”

It never occurred to Sergeant Sands and his kind that it was the duty of all police officers to protect the public, whether that public permitted them to appropriate fruit and peanuts or not. However, his head was just that shape.

As weeks passed Andy Dann became a favorite among the small dealers, especially with Tony Romalli. And one morning a full quart of fresh roasted peanuts arrived at the Dann home, with this note—“To Officer Andy Dann, with the compliments and respect of Tony Romalli.”

Of course, Tony had asked some one to write the note for him, but the meaning was all his. Soon the news reached headquarters and the boys thought it was just a new form of chiseling.

“The punk won’t take a bit of fruit or a bag of peanuts without paying for it,” opined Sergeant Sands, “but will you notice that he accepts a free quart? How’s that for graft!”

Another notion of Andy Dann’s that irked his brother officers was the one about ordinances being obeyed and likewise enforced. Andy didn’t think it fair for Mr. Big to have his ticket for driving while drunk cancelled, while Mr. Little paid the full fine and court costs.

The time when Andy had the nerve to give a ticket to His Honor the Mayor for over-parking was a field day at headquarters. The lads roared with laughter.

“The young dope is as good as off the force,” said Sergeant Sands. “Imagine the dumb cluck slippin’ a ticket to His Honor!”

Strangely, and much to the surprise of the force, His Honor called at the traffic bureau the next morning and paid the ticket. Not a word of complaint; not a single remark of any kind. This action puzzled the boys no end. And then when the town’s biggest banker, John H. Carnavelly, stepped into the bureau and paid an over-parking

fine, without registering outrage, the cops thought the world was due for a quick end.

Then the Farr murder broke. At the time, Andy Dann had been on the force for about five weeks. Thomas D. Farr was a leading attorney and a man of fair wealth.

It was 9 o’clock, Friday morning, when Ruth Joyce, his private secretary, had screamed into the phone that Farr was lying behind his desk, with two bullet holes in his head.

“Is there anyone else there with you?” asked Captain Forrest Nelson of the homicide division.

“No one. I just came to work. Mr. Farr was alive when I left the office at 6 o’clock last night. He said that he was going to do some studying on a few cases and might remain until around midnight.”

“See that no one touches the body—or anything else,” said Captain Nelson. “We’ll be right over.”

Arriving at the Farr offices, on the second floor of the Bayfront building, Captain Nelson, accompanied by Detective Captain Barker, of the bureau of identification, found Farr as stated by Miss Joyce. She met him in the hall, surrounded by a cluster of awed and whispering office workers.

Farr was lying face to the floor. The two bullet holes in his head were almost within an inch of each other. It couldn’t have been suicide because no gun was found. Later it was determined by ballistics that the gun used was a .38 Colt. Detective Captain Barker was unable to raise any fingerprint clues. Ten sets of prints were forwarded to the FBI at Washington but all returned minus any leads.

THE private life of Farr was excellent. He had been a widower for nearly two years, and, since the death of his wife, had never been seen with a woman. His two sons, 22 and 24, were in the armed services of the nation.

But the report of Dr. Crane Larrabee, coroner’s physician, gave a clue, a real clue. The doctor had examined the body and stated, positively, that Farr had been dead at least two days. This placed Ruth Joyce on the hot spot. She had said that she had seen Farr, alive, the evening before.

The following morning Miss Joyce was summoned to headquarters.

"You have stated, Miss Joyce," quizzed Captain Nelson, "that Mr. Farr was alive the night before you found his dead body."

"That is true."

"I wish to point out to you that the statement of Dr. Larrabee and your own is very conflicting. Since Dr. Larrabee is a veteran in his profession and a man whose character always has been above reproach, I am obliged to tell you, Miss Joyce, that your position is delicate."

Captain Nelson paused and looked at Miss Joyce. She stared beyond him and made no effort to reply.

"Would you care to make another statement?" pursued Nelson.

"My original statement was the truth. If I made another statement, it would be a falsehood. I stand by my first statement."

"Very well, Miss Joyce. I regret that I must hold you for the murder of Thomas D. Farr."

Ruth Joyce did not move or show any indication that Captain Nelson's words had affected her.

"Under the circumstances, do you still refuse to change your statement?"

"I do," replied Miss Joyce, and her voice was low and steady.

Meanwhile, practically all members of the uniformed force had their pet theories. Especially Sergeant Jake Sands.

"I still say it's suicide," said Jake. "He was found near the window, wasn't he? Well, maybe after he shot himself the gun just dropped out of the window."

"Swell," said Officer Los Quig. "You should be transferred to the homicide squad. They need deep thinkers like you. And also nuts! If the gun had dropped out of the window, wouldn't it either have hit some one on the head—or at least been found?"

"I still say it's suicide," snorted Sergeant Sands.

"Could be," put in Andy Dann. "But I wouldn't like to bet it was."

"So now you're a detective!" sniffed Jake.

"Nope," grinned Andy. "But just because I'm a cop I don't have to be stupid. Suicides usually leave some positive evidence that they have killed

themselves. Farr did not. What evidence there was, all pointed toward murder."

"Blaah!" snapped Jake and walked away muttering about young whelps, still moist behind the ears.

The whistling peanut stand of Tony Romalli was directly across the street from the offices of Farr. And Tony had known Farr for at least three years. The dead attorney was a peanut addict. He had not missed a single day without buying a bag of nuts from Tony, with the exception of Sundays.

Several members of the force hit upon the notion that Tony knew, or might know, something about the case. Unfortunately, these lads had failed too many times to pay for the peanuts they had chiseled from Tony. They may have forgotten that minor matter but the little peanut vendor had not. Therefore, when they tried to pump Tony, he had less than no information.

"Say," said Tony, "why I no see Andy Dann no more?"

"He's on another beat. I guess they caught him asleep on this one." They laughed. To them the joke was very funny. But not to Tony.

It had been four days since Andy had seen Tony. But when Andy got off duty on the fourth night he went around to see the peanut merchant.

"Well, Tony," said Andy, "I see where they had a terrible murder right under your nose."

"Why you no come around?" demanded Tony. "Maybe I got something for you. I no tell them grafters nothing for anything." Andy grinned and let Tony lead him away from possible eavesdroppers.

"Looka," said Tony. "I think I got something. I keep it joost for you."

"Thanks, Tony."

IN HIS own, circuitous way, Tony explained that Farr had never failed to buy a daily bag of peanuts. But he recalled that on neither Wednesday or Thursday had Farr purchased his customary bag. On the second night, Thursday—the supposed murder day—Tony had looked up at the windows of the Farr offices and had seen a light.

"Did you see Mr. Farr moving about?" asked Andy.

Tony had not—but he had seen the form of another man and the form appeared familiar. It was Dr. Crane Larrabee.

“You must be mistaken!” said Andy. “What would Dr. Larrabee be doing there?”

“Tony can’t say. Tony no smart detect man. But Tony know that Doc Larrabee come to my stand a few minutes before and buy a bag of peanuts. This firsta time he ever buy anything from Tony.”

“Well?” pursued Andy. “What’s wrong about buying peanuts—even for the first time?”

“Nothing. Only I am so surprised that I watch him go across the street. And what you think?”

“What?”

“He go into the building of Mr. Farr, thatsa what!”

“Don’t tell anyone what you just told me, Tony,” said Andy.

“Me no tell other cops!” exclaimed Tony. “All they do is grab peanuts from Tony — and no pay!”

Andy left and crossed to the Bayfront building. His head was buzzing. Questions popped and collided in his brain. One thing was paramount: If Dr. Larrabee was telling the truth, then Ruth Joyce was lying. And vice versa.

It was now 10 p. m. The night elevator man answered Andy’s ring.

“Do you recall anyone calling on Farr on the night of the murder, or getting off at the second floor?”

“Nobody, only the women office-workers, the cleaners.”

“Is there any other way of getting upstairs?”

“Well, there is a fire-escape, around in the alley. But all the doors should have been locked.”

Andy went around to the alley and climbed the fire escape to the second floor. The door was unlocked. Two red hall lights were lit, dimly. All was quiet. Farr’s office was midway down the hall. No lights showed through the glazed-glass door. The door was locked.

Andy left the same way he had entered, down the fire escape. A sudden thought puzzled him. If Tony was right about Dr. Larrabee entering the building through the front entrance, then the elevator operator was wrong. On the other side, it may have been quite likely that Dr. Larrabee had started to go into the main entrance, then suddenly

turned and gone around to the fire escape in the alley.

The next day, in his spare time, Andy Dann checked Dr. Larrabee. He found that the doctor was married and had two boys, 11 and 13. He also learned that, for some weeks prior to the murder, Dr. Larrabee had been seen on occasions in Fort Dale, eighteen miles north of Tropical City. More, he had been seen with a woman, and she was not Mrs. Larrabee.

ANDY considered the possibilities of collusion between Dr. Larrabee and Ruth Joyce. If so, what could be the motive? Certainly not robbery. Was it blackmail? Andy discounted that. Dr. Larrabee had been associated with the department of police for a number of years and his record was clear and clean. Still, strange things happen to the human mind. A person may be an honorable citizen for years; then, a cog misses in his brain, and he or she goes off his base.

Andy couldn’t quite fit Dr. Larrabee into the murder picture. It did not make sense. He was inclined to think Ruth Joyce, if any one, was the real killer of Farr. But a check of her character proved it to be as white as that of Dr. Larrabee.

Andy went to Captain Nelson and asked for a pass to see Ruth Joyce in the county jail.

“What for?” asked the captain. “You got a date with her?” The captain laughed.

“Well, sir,” said Andy, “I understand that it is the duty of all officers to be on the alert and I think I have a sound theory about the murder of Thomas Farr.”

“Okay,” said Nelson. “You can’t do worse than the flock of clowns now chasing all the wrong clues. If you solve it, Dan, come back and I will give you ten to fifteen more that we haven’t been able to figure out.”

The police matron called Miss Joyce to the small reception room.

“Miss Joyce,” began Andy, “why are you taking the rap for Dr. Larrabee?”

It was an arrow in the air—Andy hoped it would hit a target.

Ruth Joyce gave a slight gasp, then stared vacuously at Andy Dann.

“I haven’t the slightest idea what you are talking about,” she said, quietly and evenly.

"You mean you would rather go to the chair than tell the truth?"

"What makes you think I will go to the chair?"

"The finger of guilt points at you, and no one else," said Andy. "Or doesn't it?"

"I'll never go to the chair!"

"Just now it is more than an even bet that you will. This state is getting weary of women who slay men—and think they can show a pair of legs to a jury and get away with it."

"I did *not* murder Thomas Farr and that's all I have to say!"

"When did you see Dr. Larrabee last?"

"What makes you think I even know Dr. Larrabee?"

"Call it a hunch, if you wish—but you know you know Dr. Larrabee and you know that I know it."

Ruth Joyce paused and looked absently at the white wall. "Have you talked to Dr. Larrabee recently?" asked Andy.

"Not since the murder. Suppose you talk to him and leave me alone?"

"I had that in mind. Good day, Miss Joyce."

AS SOON as Andy Dann got off duty at 9 p.m. that evening he went to the residence of Dr. Larrabee. Before going, he first checked headquarters and found the doctor had left at his usual time, 6:30 p. m.

The doctor's cottage was set in the middle of a large lot, the nearest other homes being a hundred yards distant on either side. It was in darkness. Andy tried the front and back doors. Both were locked. The doctor was probably out. For a moment Andy thought of leaving and returning some other evening. Then he changed his mind and decided to enter through the front window. He realized that this would be absolute trespassing and, if Andy's theory was a boner, would the other cops have the laugh on him!

The screen was no trouble to remove and Andy stepped into the front, or living room. Shafts of moonlight half-lit the apartment. All was quiet. Then his nostrils caught a distinctive odor. There was no other scent precisely like it. Andy knew it was blood.

Dann snapped on his flash and spotted all corners of the room. Everything appeared to be in

order. He walked to the adjacent room, at the left. Here, also, everything appeared to be normal. Next, he walked to the hall and entered the rear bedroom. First his flash traveled to the dresser and a few chairs. Then it gleamed on the double bed. It had not been slept in. The flash continued to travel.

At the foot of the bed the spot caught a sight that made Andy jerk to a nervous halt. It was a human hand, white and well-manicured, hanging over the dash. Andy found the room lights and snapped them on. Rushing to the opposite side of the bed he found the body of a man. Strangely, it was in a kneeling posture, with head hanging down, and blood still dripping from the mouth, nose and forehead. Near the right hand, which rested palm-down on the waxed floor, was a gun. A .38 Colt

Without looking at the man's face, Andy knew it was Dr. Crane Larrabee. More, he knew it was suicide and not murder. Then he did something instinctively, something he knew he should not have done. He picked up the gun, broke it, and found that three shots had been fired.

"Two for Thomas Farr," mused Andy, "and one for Dr. Larrabee, the man who killed him."

He went to the living room and dialed headquarters.

"Officer Andrew Dann reporting," he said. "I'm in the home of Dr Larrabee. He's dead. Shall I stand by?"

"How come you got there first?" demanded Captain Nelson.

"It's a long story," said Andy. "It has something to do with peanuts."

"Peanuts!" roared Captain Nelson. "I *thought* something was nuts!"

Andy returned to the death room. On the dresser he found a note:

"Darling Ruth:

This is a poor way out. Forgive me for any trouble I may have caused you. Love always.

Doc

LESS than an hour later Joyce made an official confession.

"Dr. Larrabee and I had known each other for about four months. He told me that he had been estranged from his wife for nearly six months and that he was going to get a divorce. Then he was to

marry me. But the doctor had a weird notion that I was too friendly with my late employer, Thomas Farr. This was nonsense and I told him so, time and again. It was true that at times I would be with Mr. Farr after office hours and take dictation, but it was on a purely business basis. Dr. Larrabee would not believe that. He accused me of being with Mr. Farr because I was in love with him.”

“Did you know that Dr. Larrabee killed Farr?” asked Captain Nelson.

“Of course not. But I am not surprised. He evidently came up to Farr’s office with the thought that he would catch us together. I wasn’t there, of course, and so he probably had a quarrel with Mr. Farr and then shot him. That is the way it must have happened. And it was all so needless, so utterly stupid!”

Before going on his regular beat next morning Andy Dann called at Tony Romalli’s peanut stand. Only this time the stand was entirely surrounded with the morning *News-Herald*, an extra on the murder, with the headline—**ROOKIE COP SOLVES FARR MURDER MYSTERY**. Under his left arm, Tony had a large bundle of papers.

“Beega extra!” yelled Tony. “Read alla about my fran Andy Dann, who fixa the Farr murder!”

Andy grinned.

“What—no peanuts, Tony?”

“Sure,” said Tony. “Always got peanuts for Andy.” He pushed the papers aside and plucked out a large bag. Andy tossed him a dime.

“No pay—thisa on Tony!”

Andy refused to accept the gift.

“Not on your life, Tony,” grinned Andy. “It pays to buy peanuts!”