



# Old Homicide Week

*By Robert Turner*

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*There was a hot time in Hollywood town that night—and for several nights to come.  
For a bunch of big-shot celebrities received pistol passes to a Satanic celebration.*

**K**. C. JONES was stuck. It was what he got for having the lousy job of studio detective for Acme Productions, Incorporated.

Allen Archer, Academy Award winner and Acme's number one glamour boy, had

volunteered his services as a private in the U. S. Army. Although he would be out of pictures for a year he would be twice as valuable to the studio when he returned. The publicity had been immense.

For that reason Acme didn't want

anything to happen to Archer. For that reason K. C. Jones was not chaperoning the star on a farewell celebration toot. Tomorrow morning Mr. Allen Archer would be in camp and Acme would not have to worry about him. Tonight there were to be no drunken mishaps. K. C. Jones was to see to that. Or K. C. Jones would be an ex-studio trouble-shooter, which wouldn't be appreciated by Mr. Jones' pet finance companies and loan sharks.

Right now, in the corner of the seat of Jones' canary-colored roadster, Allen Archer lolled his lank figure, one leg draped out over the door. He blasted out off-key snatches of Over There and It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary into the cool California night as they sped along.

Hunched behind the wheel K. C. Jones mused sorrowfully over the date he was .not going to have with Amy Mercer because he was stuck.

In his mind he went back an hour. . . .

Stopping by at the Do-Drive-Inn, the big glorified hamburger stand where Amy worked as a car-hop, K. C. Jones had left Archer in the car and accompanied Amy a short distance into the woods that bordered the Inn.

There in a rose-scented conveniently dark summer-house, he had explained to Amy that he couldn't meet her that night after she got through.

Amy had been swell. She understood. And after a tender moment she had run off into the woods back in the direction of the Inn. And Jones returned to his drunken charge.

Ordinarily K. C. Jones was not one to fret about a broken date. But Amy Mercer was a little something extra. He had met her at a murder case at the Inn, which is no ordinary boy-meets-girl event. And she was the most cuddlesome thing Jones had ever seen in one of those car-hop's dream-

lined uniforms.

AS THE studio dick was living through those summer-house moments again, Allen Archer broke off in mid-song and turned and leered across the seat at him.

"Go ahead," Archer ordered, sadly, "say it. Say I'm a no-good heel, K. C."

"You're a no-good heel," Jones obliged.

"Y'right," Archer admitted in a thickened monotone. "But I'm changin' new leaf—or somethin'. I've had m'fun tonight. Now you're going to have yours. Turn around. Turn around the car."

"What for?" Jones asked without interest.

"We're going back to the Do-Drive-Inn. You gotta see that li'l girl again—that li'l car-hop. Besides I want—I want hamburger and coffee."

"You mean that?" Jones said.

"Sure," Allen Archer said and laughed a deadly breath into Jones' face. "You gonna stay there with her till place closes. I'll keep buying hamburgers, and. . ."

He couldn't finish because the roadster came to an abrupt stop and Archer's forehead came to an abrupt meeting with the windshield.

All the way back to the Do-Drive-Inn the actor berated the glass for such a dirty trick. After maneuvering into a spot in the jammed parking space outside the Inn, K. C. Jones waved to Amy's girl friend Helene Adams and got out of the car.

"You order," he told Archer. "I'm going to find Amy."

Walking between cars toward the main building of the Inn, Jones scanned the hurrying, tightly uniformed figures of the busy car-hops. But he didn't find the dark-haired Amy. He questioned several of them. They hadn't seen Amy for the past hour or so. She must have taken sick and gone home, they explained. Jones checked

this with the buxom woman in charge of the girls.

The supervisor put her husky arms akimbo and fixed Jones with a disapproving stare. "I'd like to know what happened to the little monkey myself," she said fiercely. "So I could call her a liar and then break her neck. Running out on me in the busiest stretch of the night."

On the way back to the roadster K. C. Jones dug his hands into the pockets of his sports jacket and gnawed his lip. It wasn't like Amy to run out on her job like that.

And then for the second time that night K. C. Jones heard what sounded like a shot. He and Allen Archer had both heard it before, just as they were leaving the Do-Drive-Inn earlier in the evening. They had dismissed it as a car back-firing. This time Jones could not dismiss it so easily. The sound reverberated in the eardrums of his memory. He was just wondering how to check on it when he got back to the roadster and found that Allen Archer was gone.

He forgot about the shot-like sound. He hurried to a neighboring car.

"Did you see what happened to the stew who was in my car?" he asked the gang of college kids, over the blast of their car radio.

"Took a walk into the woods," one of them stopped sucking a beer bottle to blurt out. "He said he was going to climb a tree and serenade the moon." A girl in the car giggled.

JONES muttered something that sounded like, "the hell with him" and got back into the roadster, and settled for a wait.

Glancing around he again spotted Helene Adams and shouted to her. The blonde and trim Helene stopped and stared and seemed to sway a little. Then she smiled and walked toward him.

"What happened to Amy?" Jones said. "She pulled a fade-out on the place. I'm worried about her."

Helene fussed with the empty bottles on her tray. "Yeah," she said. "I guess—I guess she got sick and went home."

She looked up at Jones then and she was still smiling. But now he noticed that the smile was drawn into her face with tight, strained lines. She was pale as pulp. "You alone, K. C.?" she said through her teeth: "You with anyone?"

"A drunken star," Jones told her. "Allen Archer. He walked off somewhere on me. How about getting me a nut-burger and a bottle of suds while I wait for the screwball to wander back, Helene?"

She said: "Sure thing, K. C." She turned away and this time he was sure of it when she swayed. He reached out and grabbed her arm.

"Look," he said, frowning. "You don't look so good yourself, kid. Maybe you ought to knock off, too."

She pulled away from him without turning. "I'm all right," she murmured. "Just a little tired."

K. C. Jones shook his head as he watched her weave through the parked cars and away. Her supple, well-knit young figure in its tight uniform tried hard, but it didn't have the carefree swing it should have.

Listening to a tenor singing about a dark-haired senorita, on the college kids' radio, started Jones thinking about Amy. He was lost in a dream then until the rattle of a tray being attached to the car door snapped him to.

He looked up just as Helene Adams hurried away. He wished she wasn't so busy. He would have liked to talk to her about Amy. Still in a dreamy fog he took a swig of beer and started unwrapping the folds of paper napkin from about the hamburger. The fact that the package

seemed unusually big didn't bother him until he had all the paper off.

Then the top layer of roll toppled off. Something glinted in the flood lights that surrounded the Inn parking space. He started to replace the fallen top of roll, then stopped.

There was no meat there, no nutburger steaming and hot. Flat upon the under-side of the roll rested a small blue automatic. Under this gun-sandwich that had been brought to him was a slip of note paper.

The note was in the small, backhand slant of Amy Mercer. It said:

*K. C., darling, take this and keep it for me. Don't tell anyone where you got it no matter what happens. You've got to trust me.*

*-Amy.*

THE Hollywood trouble-shooter carefully folded the note and placed it in the pocket of his sport jacket. He picked up the automatic, holding it carefully between pieces of the paper napkin and lowering it out of sight between his legs, he bent his head and sniffed at the barrel. Then he broke open the clip. Two slugs were missing. The automatic had been fired very recently.

Folding it tenderly into the napkin first, K. C. Jones placed it in his pocket. He grabbed the beer bottle and drained it without pausing for breath.

While he ran his fingers through the crisp gray-black curls of his hair, Jones thought about the two shots he had heard that night. The sounds that he was sure now weren't backfires. He thought about little Amy Mercer with her dancing black eyes. She would be hiding somewhere, full of terror, her lovely little figure aching with it. He started to get out of the car and look for Helene Adams. He remembered how shaken Helene had been.

He changed his mind about looking for Helene, deciding that it might not be so good cavorting around with an automatic in his pocket that had been used for what hellish purpose he knew not. Not until he found out a little more.

"Allen Archer!" The name suddenly exploded from his lips. "Allen is drunk. He's missing, too. He went toward the woods!"

Trying not to look hurried, he got out of the car. Trying to walk right, trying not to look nervous, Jones started toward the woods.

It was very dark in the trees. Instinctively he traced back over his earlier footsteps and came to the shadowed little summer-house. He stood by the railing, listening for something. He didn't know what. He didn't hear anything. But premonitions of something wrong, very close at hand, sent chills like wriggling clammy worms up his spine.

K. C. Jones lit a match and held it before him as he entered the summerhouse. In the weak yellow flare he saw them on the floor, on the dirt and leaf-strewn floor.

The girl in the car-hop's uniform had straight, firmly rounded legs and soft, white arms, that Jones knew right away. One of her arms was flung across her eyes. Her lips were parted a little showing an edge of white teeth. Even in death Amy Mercer looked very lovely.

Her, companion wasn't quite so lovely. One of his legs was doubled under him and his pale features were still loose with drunkenness. It was Allen Archer. The whole side of his head was one big smear of blood running from an angry red furrow where a bullet had creased along the scalp above the ear. One of his hands was covered with crimson, too. The right thumb was shattered to a pulp. Archer must have been pushing his hand through

his hair when he was shot. He had lost a thumb but it had deflected the bullet and it might have saved his life.

The match burned Jones' finger and dropped. He stood quite still there in the dark. One of his hands dropped to his side and touched the bulge that the paper-wrapped automatic made in his jacket pocket. He knew now where those two bullets had gone.

Jones fumbled for another match. The bullet hole in Amy's chest made it certain that she was dead. He wanted to check on Archer.

He broke off the match but he didn't light it. Coming from the direction of the parking space was the sound of a group of people crashing through the underbrush, accompanied by giggles and raised voices.

K. C. Jones didn't like the way things were shaping up. He didn't want to be seen beside the two gun-victims just then. He dashed out of the summer-house and hid behind a tree and watched a flashlight dance through the darkness, come closer and closer.

It was the gang of college kids. First they had seen Archer enter the woods, then Jones. Youthful curiosity got the best of them and they had come to investigate.

Jones didn't wait to witness their reactions at the gruesome find that awaited them. If there was still anything that could be done for Archer, those kids would do it. They could summon an ambulance. Meanwhile Jones had things to do.

**H**E HEADED for the Inn proper, and when he didn't see Helene Adams around outside he went right through to the kitchen of the place.

In the kitchen, Helene was talking to a short, heavy-shouldered man wearing a white chef's cap. K. C. Jones went right up to them. He appeared to grab Helene's arm casually, but his fingers bit into her flesh.

"Who makes the sandwiches that go out to the cars, Helene?" he asked in a flat, dangerous voice.

The heavy-built man tapped his chest. He was very dark and swarthy. He had a blue-shaven beard that grew right up and around his deeply sunken eyes. He was handsome if you liked the dark, moody type.

He said: "I make the sandwiches. Why?"

Before Jones could answer Helene said quickly: "It—it's all right, Lon. I know what he means." She grabbed Jones' coat lapels and her hands fluttered there. She forced a grin. "You're cute, K. C., wanting to come in here and congratulate the one who made your sandwich. I didn't think it would be that good. Since it was for you, I made it myself. Sometimes if we're not busy, the girls do that."

K. C. Jones didn't say anything for a moment. Then he spoke softly. "Come outside for a moment, Helene. I want to talk to you."

"You stay here, Helene," the dark man butted in. "We're busy as hell. You stay here."

Jones' eyes thinned. He turned his whole body toward the sandwich-man, but Helene wormed herself in between them. "Please, K. C.," she said. "This is Lon Fanchi, my boy friend, K. C. He's a little jealous. I—I'll see you some other time. Please, K. C."

Her eyes were almost talking to him. Her fingers on his arm were trembling. Jones nodded and strode out of the kitchen.

He found a phone booth, dialed Hollywood police and spoke to Matty Doyle, head of Hollywood Homicide. The studio detective told Doyle about the double shooting in the summerhouse. He didn't tell him about the automatic he had received between two slices of roll.

When he was finished, Matty Doyle said: "Hey, K. C., that Amy Mercer is your latest flame, ain't she?"

Jones said: "Yep, if you want to be romantic about it."

Doyle went on: "And you were running around tonight with Allen Archer, weren't you, and Archer is known all over the film town as a wolf, and he and Amy were shot while together out in that summer-house. You know, that looks—"

The homicide man suddenly broke off, with a choking sound in his throat. K. C. Jones grinned grimly. He could almost see Doyle getting red about his big drooping ear lobes, cursing his own dumbness at letting Jones see the way his suspicions were running.

"Look here, K. C.," Doyle finally went on. "You know—heh-heh—I didn't mean anything by that. Just—uh—trying to figure how you stumbled into this thing. You stay there, now, K. C. None of your tricks. Me and the boys'll be right out. You got nothing to fret about, K. C. Stay right there."

**H**E HUNG up, and so did Jones. Jones thought: Oh, no, nothing to worry about when a plug-head like Matty Doyle figures that I went to the summer-house and saw my actor charge Archer and my girl friend Amy—and gunned them down. Oh, no, I should hang right around with the kill-gun right here in my pocket and stick out my wrists for Matty's bracelets.

K. C. Jones went out to his car, got in and drove into Hollywood. He stopped in front of the small apartment court where Amy Mercer had been sharing a two-room and bath with Helene Adams. He went up to their flat and did a trick on the lock that involved a couple of toothpicks.

Starting right there in the living room, with an old-fashioned roll-top desk, Jones went into a systematic search. He didn't

know what he was looking for, but he had all kinds of hopes.

K. C. Jones figured it this way. He had heard two shots, an hour apart. Amy Mercer had not been seen around the Inn for an hour, which approximated the time since he and Archer were first there that night. That meant the first shot had been the one which killed Amy, right after she left Jones in the summer-house. The second one had got Allen Archer when he wandered into the woods.

All that remained for Jones to learn was why the man and woman, who he was almost certain didn't even know each other, should be shot by the same person in the same spot, at two different times. Also, what Helene Adams had to do with this and why she had given him the murder gun hidden in a hamburger roll. That was all.

Hoping to find an explanation for at least some of those things, K. C. Jones ransacked the desk. Tucked in the back of a bottom drawer he found a stack of letters wrapped in string. The top one was addressed to Miss Amy Mercer, Hollandsville, Ohio. It was postmarked Hollywood, California, dated about two years ago.

Jones put the package of letters on the corner of the desk. He didn't know how long he had to search. He could go through the letters later.

A moment later a faint, metallic sound came from the direction of the hall door. Jones wheeled about, his hand going for his gun in his back, leather-lined holster pocket.

He waited a few seconds and when the sound was not repeated, he tiptoed toward the door, flung it suddenly open. There was no one outside. There was no one in the hall in either direction.

He glanced at the metal-doored peep hole in the door, trying to remember

whether it had been open, slightly, the way it was now, when he entered. He couldn't remember.

Carefully shutting the door again, Jones went back to his search. He finished the desk and went into the girls' bedroom. At the bottom of a bureau drawer, under a neatly folded pile of silken things he found a small metal box.

Pawing through the odds and ends in the box—old dance programs, a pressed flower, a locket and a couple of rings—K. C. Jones found a small newspaper clipping. It was the picture of a young man. A young man with a dark and heavily handsome face with beard-shadowed cheeks and sunken, brooding eyes. Under the newspaper picture was the caption:

LON J. FANCHO, HOLLANDSVILLE H.S.  
SENIOR CLASS VALEDICTORIAN

Jones stood up then, tucking the picture into his pocket. His nostrils twitched from a faint acrid odor of burning paper. He heard slight sounds coming from the bathroom off the living room. He rushed toward the bathroom, slipping his gun free.

He stood in the doorway looking at the small blonde girl holding a match to what was left of a stack of letters. As the girl turned, Jones strode toward her, snatched at the few pieces of paper still in her hand.

"Thanks for saving these, Helene," he said.

**H**ELENE ADAMS stared at him with wide, frightened blue eyes. "Where—where did you come from?"

"Very cliché," Jones said. "You come in here, see a stack of letters that should have been in the desk drawer, sneak into the bathroom and burn them and then—"

"Come on, Helene, let's not fool around."

The blonde girl fell forward against him, clasping her arms around his neck. "K. C., I—I'm so scared. You've got to help me."

Jones held the scraps of letters he had salvaged safely out to one side. His free hand eased her away.

"You've got plenty right to be," he said. "I'm going to ask you a lot and I want to hear the answers straight. I was supposed to think Amy sent that murder-automatic to me to hide for her, so I'd keep it on me and it would look good for the cops to pin me for murdering Amy and Archer when in a jealous rage I caught them together. But Amy didn't send me that gun, not with two bullets missing from it. Because one of them killed her. That little trick you cooked up. You wrote that note. No one else would be so familiar with Amy's small, peculiar backhand slant. Why, Helene, why?"

She pushed her fists into her eyes. "I—I don't know. I didn't write the note, K. C. Amy did give me that gun and the note. With orders that if she didn't return in an hour I was to give them to you."

"Malarkey," Jones told her. "How did she know I'd be back? How—"

There was no more of that. A booming, sharp command came from the other room. It said: "There he is! Put your hands in the air, K. C. Jones."

Matty Doyle, with two detective members of his squad, was coming across the living room toward the bathroom. Doyle's big raw Irish face was flushed with pleasure. One of his red ham fists gripped a service revolver.

Without moving his body, K. C. Jones reached out and slammed the bathroom door shut and snapped the lock. He twirled Helene Adams around.

"You saw the light, came up, peeked through the peep hole, saw it was me, called the cops and then came up to stall

me if I tried to lam. Didn't you?"

Helene Adams' mouth opened to answer, then shut abruptly. Her teeth clicked together as Jones' fist pumped a short but lethal uppercut to her little pointed chin. The girl sank in a heap to the floor.

K. C. Jones went out the window and onto a ledge that ran around the building as the door creaked on its hinges with the first slam of Doyle's bulk against it.

He came to a drainpipe at the corner and shinnied down it, with the palms of his hands ripping on the joints. But that didn't matter because he was down and into his car when Matty Doyle started yowling at him from the bathroom window.

Driving into a nearby driveway to a private house, Jones snicked off the car's lights and sat in the dark. Soon he saw Doyle and the other cops hit into the police cars and grind away. He continued to sit there, watching the entrance of the apartment house, watching for Helene Adams to come out.

FOR a brief moment he gave up his vigil to glance hastily at the shreds of letters with their blackened edges. On one piece he found phrases that meant something. The words went: "—Does your little friend, Helene, still think she's in love with me, darling? She's a cute kid and I like her. Maybe I can get the both of you out here soo—"

The handwriting was heavy, obviously a man's. With the picture of one of Hollandsville High School's senior class valedictorians, it told E K. C. Jones a little story.

Lon Fanchó, Amy Mercer and Helene Adams were all from the same town. Lon and Amy were sweethearts. Helene was Amy's girl friend and in love with Lon, who was too enraptured of Amy to bother with her. Lon had come to California, got

a job at the Do-Drive-Inn, a couple of years later, had Amy and Helene come out and found jobs there for them, as carhops.

The rest was pure surmise but Jones saw it like this:

Lon Fanchó had learned of K. C. Jones' interest in Amy. Apparently Amy had broken up with Fanchó, and Fanchó had followed Amy this night, seen her go with Jones to the summerhouse. As soon as Jones and Amy parted, Fanchó killed Amy in a jealous rage.

From there on Jones was stumped. He couldn't figure Helene's part, nor why poor Allen Archer was shot.

He didn't have much time for further conjecture. He saw Helene come out of the apartment house, walking swiftly. Jones trailed, a block behind, in his car. She walked for about a mile, then entered another court apartment, one similar to the place she lived.

The detective parked his roadster, entered the house. In the lobby name cards he found that Lon Fanchó lived in apartment 3E. He nudged the bell under another name plate and when the buzzer released the door, entered the hall.

Outside of apartment 3E Jones stared at the round peep-hole in the door, saw, with a prayer of thanks that people are usually lax about locking them, that the little metal cover of the peep-hole was on the latch.

Borrowing a trick from Helene, Jones put his eye to the tiny aperture, peeked into the apartment. He saw Lon Fanchó, his black hair mussed, standing in the center of a room with Helene. Helene was clinging to his arm. They were talking earnestly. Jones listened:

"He suspects us, I tell you," Helene said. "Lon, we're going to get caught. If you'd only shot Jones as I planned instead of that drunken actor, we wouldn't have had any of this!"



FANCHO knocked her arm down, paced nervously off out of sight of the peep-hole, but K. C. Jones could still hear his voice.

“All I knew was what you told me—that he was in a yellow roadster. I didn’t know there was somebody else with him and that Jones had gone on to the Inn. . . . Listen, Helene. We just keep calm, don’t get all rattled. I don’t see how he can prove anything.”

K.C. Jones didn’t hear any more. He didn’t have to. He was already putting the missing pieces together.

Knowing Lon Fanchó’s jealous nature, Helene Adams had told him about Amy and K. C. This night she had seen Jones when he first appeared at the Inn, informed Fanchó that he was there. Fanchó had left the kitchen, armed, half crazed with jealousy, seen Amy and Jones go to the summer-house. In the darkness there he couldn’t get a good look at Jones.

Soon as Jones left, Fanchó shot Amy. Helen, who had followed Fanchó, hoping for something like that, witnessed the killing. She was determined to get Lon for her own now. She would use her knowledge of his crime to make sure of that.

Talking it over, when Helene had seen Jones’ yellow roadster pull in the second time, she and Fanchó had hit on the plan for killing Jones and using him to cover up the murder of Amy. Fanchó would get Jones to the summer-house, shoot him, leave the gun in his hands and make it look like a suicide pact.

But Allen Archer had spoiled things. Fanchó, who had been waiting and watching, mistaking Archer for Jones, let Archer enter the woods. Then Fanchó shot Archer, and left him for dead.

A few minutes later after he had reported the deed done, to Helene, the blonde car-hop had seen Jones still alive.

That was why she was so shaken. So they had, in desperation, devised another plan. Through Helene’s ruse, they got the murder gun into Jones’ possession.

From there on it was all clear.

K. C. Jones drew his gun, put the muzzle against the lock of the door and pulled trigger. With the explosion of the gun the lock blasted apart. Jones barged into the apartment.

HELENE and Lon Fanchó faced Jones and the smoking barrel of his gun, with eyes splashed wide with guilty terror. Their taut features looked as though they would rip wide with the strain at any second.

Jones grinned grimly. “Don’t worry about that evidence, Fanchó. I’ve got plenty. Pieces of letters. The murder gun in my pocket without my fingerprints on it, but with yours probably on some part of the clip or shells. Then there’s—”

Before Jones could finish, Fanchó grabbed Helene with a sudden, reaching twist and yanked her in front of him, shielding him. His other hand came out of his pocket with a gun in it. Fanchó said:

“Shoot at me and you kill Helene. Drop that gun or I’ll kill you!”

Jones did not want Helene dead. He needed her to convict Fanchó, in spite of what he had said about evidence. Jones dropped his gun to the floor. Fanchó, still holding Helene tight in front of him, edged toward the door.

There was a wild, glassy gleam in Fanchó’s eyes. Jones had seen that look before. Just as Fanchó reached the door, the Hollywood detective pitched face-first toward the floor. Fanchó’s gun crashed and the bullets whistled past Jones’ head.

He lay still, not even breathing, flat on his face, until he heard the footsteps pounding out in the hall.

With one flashing movement, K. C.

Jones got to his feet and scooped up his dropped gun. He swung into the hall. His own gun cracked and echoed in the corridor. Near the stairs Fancho let Helene go. She stumbled and fell. Fancho grabbed at his leg as crimson oozed through his spread fingers from the wound in his thigh.

K. C. Jones' gun whammed again and Fancho's weapon clattered to the floor. Then Jones stood there, guarding them, waiting for the cops he knew would come in answer to the alarm sent out on the gunshots. . . .

The next day Jones went to the private hospital where Allen Archer had been taken. In a few weeks the glamour boy would be as good as new—except for a scar on his head that his hair would cover

if combed properly, and the loss of his right thumb.

Leaving the hospital Jones grinned. Everybody was happy now. Matty Doyle's books were cleared of the murder. And Monte Pressen, Jones' boss, was going around kissing people. Pressen had learned that now, with one thumb gone, Allen Archer was ineligible for Army duty. The studio had gained all that wonderful publicity and in the bargain was not going to lose its biggest male star.

But the grin didn't last long on K. C. Jones' lips. He started to think about Amy Mercer, and how sweet she looked in that Do-Drive-Inn uniform, and how dark and soft the night had been that first time with her in the summer-house. He swore to himself that he would never go to the Do-Drive-Inn again.