



hold, seized his tools and left.

On the next morning of March 16, 1937, more than five years after Harvey Hoffee's death, Spencer and State's Attorney Creighton opened the jar and removed four letters. Three were short, in block letters and script, and they were threatening notes to Harvey Hoffee. But the fourth letter was long, in a woman's handwriting and ran, in part:

"Darling:
"You came near not having a sweetheart left to love you . . . I fixed it Sat. nite in some grape juice and added lye so I guess that is the reason his throat is so raw. When he went to bed he was sick . . . I fainted . . . he got me a drink in that glass that had the dope in it so you see I got some too. I thought I was going to die . . ."

"So darling I have done everything in my power to free myself and to be with you, for you know I dearly love you and I know you do me so it's up to you to do it or have it done. Charlie, as well as you are acquainted can't you find someone to do it or else come and do it yourself, that would be the safest . . ."

There was more discussing the cold-blooded plot to kill the hapless husband and ending, "Bye-bye as ever your true one—Alva."

Seemingly Flynn had saved the letters to give him a hold over, Alva, just as Merritt had taken them to gain the last advantage. Now the law had them and the whole structure of deceit and murder was crashing at last. Creighton told an assistant, "Get Alva Flynn in here."

Alva Hoffee Flynn turned an inscrutable, heart-shaped face toward the state's attorney, who said, "We called you in here, Mrs. Flynn, in case you wanted to tell anything more

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about the death of your first husband, Mr. Hoffee."

"I told everybody all I knew about that a long time ago," she said calmly.

Creighton reached into his desk and brought out a piece of paper. "I have a letter here," he said. "I wonder if it sounds familiar to you?"

He began to read—"Darling: You came near not having a sweetheart left to love you . . . I fixed it—"

Alva Flynn gave a low moan. Her eyes rolled toward the ceiling and she slipped unconscious from the chair. This time the water offered to revive her from a faint contained no residue of poison.

Pale and shaken, she made no effort to deny authorship of the letters and admitted the murder plot which had put Harvey Hoffee in his grave and cleared the way for her second marriage.

She herself, she said, had written the threatening letters so that they could be shown to neighbors and a false trail started in case it should be necessary to attack Hoffee physically. But poison was resorted to and when the first attempt failed, Flynn had provided her with more, she said.

With cruel cunning she had waited for an opportunity, which presented itself when Hoffee cut himself and developed an infection and fever. Given poison again, he had succumbed and the puzzled physician had blamed tetanus. No autopsy had been performed.

On April 16, 1937, Alva Flynn pleaded guilty to murder and was sentenced to 99 years in the women's prison at Dwight, Ill. She is still serving her term. Charles Flynn also pleaded guilty but because he had not actually given the poison he drew the lighter sentence of 17 years. After serving the minimum time, he was released on parole and dropped from sight.

Next week another story from the Album of Famous Mysteries.

"You Will Die Soon . . ." the Unsigned Message Read. The Farmer Never Suspected Who Had Written It.