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54/08/14 Near Fight, Cry of Lie, End Steve's Accusation of Houk

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The bespectacled, serious-faced man in the brown suit and Panama hat stepped off the elevator on the third floor of Central Police Station.

Looking straight ahead, he walked past the closed door of Detective Chief James McArthur.

The door opened, and Clarence Hawkins, veteran secretary of the Detective Bureau, looked out. “In here, Dr. Sheppard,” he called.

Dr. Stephen Sheppard, 34, stepped into the room and one of the most dramatic moments of his life.

The young osteopath didn’t change expression as Bay Village Mayor J. Spencer Houk, who had considered Dr. Steve a friend until short days ago, leaped to his feet and shook his fist. “You liar!” the 42-year-old mayor blurted.

Dr. Steve’s eyes wandered about the room, taking in McArthur, Homicide Capt. David Kerr and Detective Adelbert O’Hara.

On the green wall was a framed quotation about “Loyalty.” It was loyalty to his younger brother, Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard, 30, that brought Dr. Steve into this scene.

Glancing out McArthur’s window, he could see the grim gray sandstone of the County Jail, where Dr. Sam sat in a cell block—charged with the July 4 murder of his pregnant wife, Marilyn.

Dr. Steve was in this room because he had pointed the finger of suspicion at Mayor Houk, Sam’s close friend. In an effort to free his brother, he had splashed serious aspersions on the reputation of his murdered sister-in-law.

The seeds of the emotion-packed confrontation were planted Thursday, when Dr. Steve paid a surprise visit to police headquarters.

He wanted to “provide some new leads,” he told Mc-
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Arthur and Chief Frank W. Story.

McArthur jotted down notes as the intense osteopath spilled out his "facts and suspicions" for more than an hour.

"I hope you'll do something about this," Dr. Steve said.

He said he had come in of his own volition—that Sam's chief defense counsel, William J. Corrigan, didn't know of his personal effort to save his brother.

Story and McArthur swept on Dr. Steve's accusations. They presented the charge of Corrigan and the Sheppard family that they had "closed your mind" to the possibility that Marilyn Sheppard might have been murdered by anyone but her husband.

Friday morning, McArthur dictated his notes, and Story gave the terse order: 'Bring Houk in for questioning as a suspect in the Marilyn Sheppard murder investigation, on the accusation of Dr. Stephen Sheppard.

Astonished by Order

Houk, wore and haggard from the strain of the 41-day old murder investigation, most trying experience of his career as a suburban mayor, was home at 2001 Lake Rd. when the doorbell rang.

He was astonished when O'Hara told him he could come downtown voluntarily.

"I hope you'll do something about this," Dr. Steve said.

The startled mayor came voluntarily to the police station to change from his T-shirt and baggy blue slacks.

"I'm not here as the tree-shrouded murder home at 28924 Lake Road as the police call it," he refuted without "absolute proof.

Dr. Sam 26 days of freedom.

And here was Houk—not under arrest, in custody, being brought to headquarters for grilling as a possible suspect on the unsupported statement of a man at whose house he had once lived who had declared himself a habitual drunkard.

The Bay Village mayor, a slender person, exploded with indignation when the blunt charge was repeated.

"The damnest lie I ever heard!" he said.

McArthur, Kerr and O'Hara pulled no punches in their interrogation. They fired questions at him with machine-gun rapidity.

Here as a Suspect

"You're not here as the mayor of Bay Village," they told him. "You're here as a suspect in a murder case."

They received the same treatment as any other suspect. This is what Dr. Stephen Sheppard, in fact.

"You're a liar!"

Dr. Steve's statement.

Houk gritted his teeth, denched his fists, and at one time even glared at his accuser as McArthur read off Dr. Steve's statement.

"You're not here as the mayor of Bay Village," they told him. "You're here as a suspect in a murder case."

"I hope you'll do something about this," said O'Hara.

"You're a liar!"

Houk glared angrily at his accuser. Dr. Steve sat tauntly, not a muscle moved on his lips, staring at the walls, taking in the pictures of former police chiefs and mayors.

The ordeal that began at 3:45 p.m., when Dr. Steve rode downstairs, left him somewhat relieved. "No comment, fellows," he said. "I'm tired. I'm going home."

Then Houk came out, looking somewhat relieved.

"You're a liar!"

Dr. Steve left the room first. Speaking not a word, he strode towards the elevator, looking somewhat relieved.

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