



The Case of the Nervous Accomplice

Erle Stanley Gardner

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Sybil Harlan is aware of her husband's dalliance with an alluring business associate. Sybil asks Perry Mason to help her sour the real estate deal and win back her errant spouse. Unfortunately a blackmailer gets wind of the scheme and murder takes place.

The Case of the Nervous Accomplice Details

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Author : Erle Stanley Gardner

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Perry Mason was never above doing some near-shady things to confuse the issue. Here, when the testimony of a cab driver is crucial to the case, he gets his client and a friend to take the same cab later and to make sure the fare is exactly the same as when his client had taken the cab earlier. (Not really a spoiler, this happens early in the book). This slight of hand nearly blows up in the lawyer's face, but it does prove that Mason will do nearly ANYTHING to defend his client. Here we also get not only a preliminary hearing, but the case then goes on to a jury trial. We also get Mason kissing his secretary, Della Street (just as he's doing so, however, he figures out a crucial clue to the case and breaks off the embrace). The resolution to the mystery is far-fetched and convoluted, but with all the legal shenanigans who cares?

A brilliant plan of a wife to keep her husband, and brilliant plan of Mason's to keep her from being identified as fleeing from the scene of crime!

Great courtroom drama, A must read!

A very interesting case. This case was enjoyable also for the competent way the prosecution laid down its side. Usually, it is a one-sided affair with Mason being the amicable, *sauve*, polished lawyer, out to show the truth and nothing but that, with Burger over reacting and throwing his weight at everybody. Here, Burger is given a much better and believable stand.

Another good thing is the case itself. Plus the bonus of a complete court procedure from preliminary to the final jury trial.

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The story starts with a woman seeking Perry's help in dealing with a golddigger that's trying to steal her husband. The woman than becomes a suspect in a murder. The story centers around a shady real estate deal and the people trying to make a fast buck. One of them resorts to murder and Perry has to find out the who

and why. Good suspense and the courtroom action is always good.

Nick Duretta says

Though the resolution of the murder gets a bit convoluted in the end, Perry Mason comes through (as always) by outwitting everyone with often-irritating infallibility. What's great about this book is its slightly idealized depiction of L.A. in the 1950s, a world in which vainglorious, arrogant men ostensibly ruled the city, but were easily tools at the hands of scheming, seductive women.

Tony says

THE CASE OF THE NERVOUS ACCOMPLICE. (1955). Erle Stanley Gardner. ***1/2.

Mason takes on the case involving a woman who is trying to get her husband out of the clutches of another woman. She has a plan that will change how the "other woman" is viewed by her husband, from a woman of mystery and romance to one of a business bent. Her plan is to buy up shares of the company her husband has interest in, and use those shares to inflate the expectations of the other shareholders. Her hope is that this change in circumstances will force her husband's amor to become a grasping shareholder and shed her assumed role as a temptress. The plan begins to work, but works too well: a murder occurs. It turns out that the wife is the most logical suspect (as if logic comes into any of Gardner's tales) and the law then begins to take its course. This is a well-plotted story from Gardner that will keep you on the edge of your seat up through the end of the court session. Expect some unusual ploys from Mason – they're on their way.

Deborah says

A perfect beach read or junk food for the brain.

E says

This case is famous because Perry's client gets picked up by a taxi while fleeing the murder scene. In order to confuse the driver's identification of his client, he has her and a friend catch a ride with the same driver later in the day, making sure to take a ride with the same fare as the first. This ploy works, but all it really does it force Burger to call a grand jury to get an indictment since his key eyewitness blows up at the hearing thanks to Mason's hi-jinks. The real turn in the plot is when the title character takes an odd load of junk to the town dump, only to see it disappear a few hours later. Perry is able to figure out what this junk would have been used for, and is able to trace its disappearance's significance. Voila, case solved. Not really that complicated once you think about it, but it sure is fun along the way.

False says

The usual. Fighting over business dealings, in this case construction and stocks. Of course there is a wicked

curvy dame and an innocent--or is she? The one thing that makes this Mason book stand out above others is that Hamilton Burger, the District Attorney, says, "incompetent, irrelevant and immaterial," so many times I lost count in the courtroom scene. At least twice, he says it three times on one page. I had to start laughing. In the end, it was probably at least twenty times. I think Gardner might have been hitting the double Bacardi runs that Perry likes with dinner a little early in the work day.

Erskine says

Fairly entertaining.

Ed says

#48 in the Perry Mason series. Gardner's foreword dedicates the book to Joseph Worcester Spelman, M.D., the State Pathologist of Vermont, in recognition of advances he and his colleagues have made in forensic medicine. Determine of time of death through examination of stomach contents and typical patterns of powder residue in gunshot wounds then feature prominently in the story. A lively read and the circumstances surrounding the shooting seem to inescapably make Mason's client the shooter. The courtroom climax is ingenious as Perry once again saves the day.

Perry Mason series - Aware of her husband's dalliance with an alluring business associate involved with him in an important real estate deal, Sybil Harlan asks Perry Mason to help her sour the deal and win back her errant spouse.

Evgeny says

Sybil Harlan realized a simple truth: if you (her in this case) attracted your future husband using only great looks and if your (her again in this case) husband is the one who can be attracted by great looks only, after a while the marriage would be in trouble because somebody more younger and by definition more beautiful will come along. Sybil's husband was in real estate business; one of his new clients happened to be a young beautiful gold-digger who was never shy about meeting her broker near a swimming pool wearing a bikini.

The result: Sybil realized she desperately needs to take drastic measures to save her marriage.

Enter Perry Mason. He was hired by Sybil Harlan to throw a wrench into the smooth machinery of the gold-digger real estate deal to show her husband true colors of her rival.

Her plan was quite elaborate, but it would take too much time to describe it; let me just say it involved stock of another company. Sufficient to say, Mason not only became interested, but improved it using his knowledge of the law. Everything seemed to be going according to plan, but the fate interfered and one person was killed with all clues pointing at Mason's client. Mason always sticks with his clients until the end (and presents them with such bills for the services that the majority of them think it would be a good idea to plead guilty from the start), so this is exactly what he was doing for the rest of the story. I would like to note that the identity of the victim took me by surprise.

In one of the previous books Mason said that if you fight for a client who was framed a winning tactic for the

defense is to mix up the evidence as much as possible. You confuse the prosecution, but most importantly you also destroy the perfect framing work done by the villain.

This time it was exactly what he did. Fairly early in the book the prosecution's case was heavily based on the testimony of a taxi driver.

Having foreseen this Mason managed to confuse the poor guy to such extent the he was having trouble recollecting his day in the courtroom; a priceless scene.

I keep saying this, but the series is fairly even in quality. Thus the rating is my usual 4 stars.

Anna says

The case of nervous accomplice

Mrs. Harlan calls on Mason to talk about certain domestic difficulties. She is certain that her husband is cheating on her and is about to divorce her, but naturally, Mason doesn't deal with divorce cases. She manages to arouse his and Della Street's interests by presenting a complex intrigue in which she needs the lawyer's help. Everything seems to go smooth until someone gets murdered, and it's not someone I'd have guessed. The book has a little different order than usual. I missed the usual part where there has to be something indicating guilt, for the person to be prosecuted. The trial starts at 40% of the book so it's little early. There's a little of romance and business, I wouldn't call it one of Gardner's bests.

Shilpi Jain says

Perry Mason. Amazing as always!
