

excerpt from **Arsenic & Old Lace**

by Amye Archer

"Google it", this phrase has transformed the way people get information. While visiting my grandmother just the other day, a conversation arose between my sister, myself, and my grandmother, about Cary Grant, and whether or not he was a Capricorn. My grandmother, being an astrologer, has a vested interest in these types of facts. In a moment of instinct I looked for a way, any way I could find, to get to Google, where I know I could type anything and have a million answers at my finger tips. Since the most modern piece of equipment in my grandmother's three room apartment is her black Singer sewing machine, the kind with the hand wheel, we knew we would have to wait for our answer.

At one point, my sister and I gasped in horror as my grandmother, in what can only be described as a moment of desperation, pulled from her closet an encyclopedia. After ten minutes or so of thumbing through the gigantic book, she came up empty handed. Upon returning home, I ran to one of my three computers, googled "Cary Grant Birthday" and within minutes had satisfied all of our curiosities. The answer, incidentally, was January 18th, making him a cusp-born Capricorn.

There is no doubt that Google has changed the face of search engines. It's reliable, quick, and sometimes even fun, which is what I was using it for one day last week as I sat alone at my desk with ten or fifteen free minutes. It was mid afternoon and I was between classes, when I suddenly remembered something I had heard one of my student's say. You're no one until you've been googled. So, perhaps to stroke my ego a little bit, or just to quell the boredom setting in, I decided to google my name, and the results were...interesting, to say the least.

It turns out the name, my name, that I've been working so hard to make famous, had already gained fame in the early twentieth century, thanks to Amy-Archer Gilligan, largely considered to be one of the most prolific serial killers in history. I scratched my head in amazement --not that someone who owned this name before me could be so notorious, but that I had never heard of her. An informal survey of friends and family proved I was not alone.

Newington, Connecticut is a small town located about ten miles south west of Hartford. If you blink while driving up 84, you'd miss it. It's also where, in 1901, Amy Archer and her loving husband James opened their first personal care home, "Sister Amy's Nursing Home for the Elderly". Amy Archer was not qualified to open a nursing home, but her caring nature and stellar reputation among the community caused many to overlook the lack of training. A petite dark haired woman, Amy had a natural beauty about her. Her soft voice and gentle manner led the community to give her the loving nickname "Sister Amy".

It wasn't long before the personal care home became a success, and the wealthy patrons who wanted Sister Amy's care in their final days grew so numerous that Amy and her husband opened a second facility in Windsor, Connecticut, a larger city that would give them more room and more visibility to attract clients.

The move to Windsor proved to be too much for James Archer, however, and he died shortly after. Thankfully, Amy had taken a large life insurance policy on him only weeks before his sudden death, and was able to continue her good work. It wasn't long before luck struck her again, and Amy met Michael Gilligan, a wealthy man who showed interest in both Amy and her work. Michael invested several thousands of dollars into The Archer Home, and for all of his contributions, he ended up landing a new wife too, Amy Archer was now Amy Archer Gilligan.

The honeymoon was cut short, however, when Michael was stricken ill and died suddenly after only six months of marriage. Amy was devastated, and the public rallied around the two-time widow. Donations poured into The Archer Home in Windsor, hoping to keep the good Sister and her good deeds in business. Fortunately for Amy, Michael had managed only weeks before to change his will and bequeath everything to her. Amy was now wealthy.

Amy's new found wealth and two dead husbands were enough to raise some eyebrows...