

The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

SYNOPSIS: Reddy turns crook, aka Collin Hewitt, mystic, writer and doghead friend as well to deliver a mysterious letter to him about Reddy's past. Reddy tells Collin he is the letter is hidden in his room, in a side a curtain pole. Collin asks that Reddy explain why he is fearful of his life, and in front of a coal fire in Collin's comfortable quarters in an old stable, out of Washington Square, New York, Reddy begins his tale.

Chapter Three

UNDERLYING TRAGEDY

REDDY'S voice was suddenly flat. "She was still only a kid of course when you left the old town, because she was nearly six years younger than I am, but I guess you remember my sister Annie, don't you?"

Collin nodded uneasily. He did not like the note that had crept into Reddy's voice.

"Annie!" he said. "Father! I've told her around a hundred times on the handles of my bicycle, and all the while she'd sing like a little lark. She was a great youngster. I suppose she was about eleven or twelve when I finally left the town. She was a good little pal of mine—"



"I know who drove the car when Pete was bumped off."

after you went away, Reddy. We both missed you a lot. What has made you mention her tonight?"

"She's part of the story I'm going to tell you," Reddy answered with a crooked smile. Her body was fished out of the river here six months after French Pete, that we were talking about, was put on the spot. That's why French Pete was bumped off—Annie had been married to him about a week before."

"I don't think I quite understand," Collin said heavily.

"Somebody else wanted her," Reddy laughed unpleasantly. "French Pete was in the way, that's all."

Collin's hand dropped to his side and clenched.

"My God!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "Go on!"

"French Pete was a pal of mine," Reddy's voice was flat again. "That's how Annie came to know him. He was a French Canadian, and his name was Mireau—Pierre Mireau. He was in the beer racket, and he wasn't any church-goer, but he was straight as a string with Annie. You see, after the mother and father died I kept Annie going in a little flat here, and, between stretches, I used to live with her."

"She wasn't for Pete's racket, and a whole lot less for mine, but she stuck to me through the years like a brick, and what any good woman could do, to shove us both back on the straight and narrow, she did. She loved Pete and Pete loved her, understand that."

REDDY paused abruptly, strode over to the decanter, hesitated an instant, and then came back.

"No," he said, "I'll wait till I'm through. I was in str when Annie got married. But even the walls where I was don't keep out the news. You know that. The night that Pete was bumped off, Annie disappeared. I got the low-down on it. She was kidnaped. And I couldn't get out. Six months later she was found in the river and identified as Mrs.

Mireau, the wife of French Pete. She had been put on the spot."

"I remember reading about that," said Collin hoarsely. "It was front-page stuff, but the name, of course, meant nothing to me."

"No," Reddy said; "of course it wouldn't."

"And then?" Collin prompted through tight lips.

"You said something about Annie being pretty when she was a child," Reddy's lips were working now. "Some of them don't grow up that way, Annie did. When she married Pete there wasn't anything in town that could touch her. And she was straight! There was only one way that swine could get her."

"I got out two months ago, and Annie's been dead nearly five now. I don't know whether that's the way he got rid of her when he got tired of her, or perhaps found out that she'd got to know too much, or whether she managed to escape and, crazy with it all, did it herself; but it was murder either way."

Reddy laughed again—it was a jangling, discordant sound. "That's why I can't leave New York. That's the 'job' I was talking about. I'll get the man who did it—or he'll get me. That's why I've got my fingers crossed on what may happen at any time to me, because I know what I'm up against."

"The police didn't get anywhere," he went on. "Anyway, it isn't a police job—it's mine."

"The code, of course," Collin nodded in understanding. "Well?"

"I know who drove the car the night Pete was bumped off, and I know who the two guys were that made a sieve of him with sawed-off shotguns, but there's no hurry about them. Their turn will come—but they're still useful. It's the big noise they work for that I'm after."

"You know who he is?" Collin's voice was husky.

"If I know who he was," Reddy stated evenly, "he wouldn't be alive tonight. No; I'm not sure yet. But I've gone a long way. Listen! Your 'master minds' and 'super crooks' are jokes compared with the one I'm talking about. He swings a mob in every racket there is, from dope and beer and booze to white-slave stuff, with a little murder organization kept on tap to round everything out. Each mob is separate, and no one in any of them knows who the big shot is that they get their orders from. They call him the Mask—that's all they know about him."

"You mean he always wears a mask?"

Reddy smiled with grim tolerance. "Oh, no!" he said. "He leaves that sort of thing to you writers. And yet he is always masked—from the soles of his shoes to the hat he wears, if you get what I mean. He can assume a dozen different characters—and does. Hence the name. No one yet has ever identified him in his real person."

"Do you know any of his lieutenants?"

"Yes," I've been working now for two months, but it was only a few days ago that I began to pick up his trail. Tonight I'm lying low, waiting for a little something I'm counting on to break my way—and, if it does, I'll have him. That's all."

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Tomorrow, things come to a swift climax.

here. When the officers hurried to the location the swimmers had disappeared.

H. C. Gaudin of Stockton, Cal., has a 35-foot snake octopus growing in his front yard.

Citrus fruit pests cost the state of California \$4,000,000 yearly for control work.

Phantom Nudists Flit Before Cops

PORTLAND, Ore., July 31.—(AP)—Police investigated today what they described as a phantom nudist colony. Several complaints were received that several men and women were seen, sans clothing, bathing on a sandbar in the Columbia river

WRIGLEY'S
FASCINATING FLAVOR
THE WRIGLEY'S JUICY FRUIT CHEWING GUM
FASCINATING FLAVOR

Climax

CLIMAX, July 31.—(Sp)—Mrs. Jennie White spent the week-end at her home in Central Point.

Walter Charley is working for Lloyd Wash.

Mr. and Mrs. K. H. Compton entertained at dinner Sunday for Mr. and Mrs. L. H. Wertz and family, Jennie White, N. P. Hanson, Hilda Morgan and two children, Mrs. Nellie Batten and Ted Kinney.

Miss Garrel Charley was married last week to Arlen Millard of Wellen.

Guests over the week-end at the Hurs; ranch were: Mrs. Tupper, Mr. Heath and daughter Betty Heath, of Medford.

Mrs. L. H. Wertz and Mrs. Frank Hurs; spent Tuesday in Medford.

Mrs. Nellie Batten of Medford was a guest at the Wertz home from Thursday until Sunday.

Mr. Banta, the McNeis salesman, spent Tuesday here.

A. J. Grissom has been putting up hay at his Central Point ranch.

Mr. and Mrs. K. H. Compton made final proof on their homestead July 28.

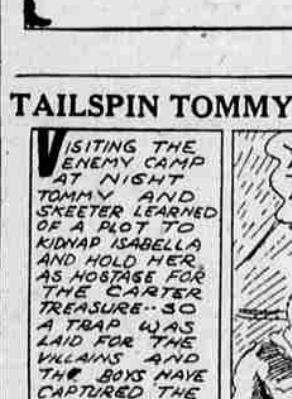
Earl Yorton spent Saturday night at the W. F. Charley home.

Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Terry visited at their Climax ranch Sunday.

N. P. Hanson and L. H. Wertz were in Medford Friday.

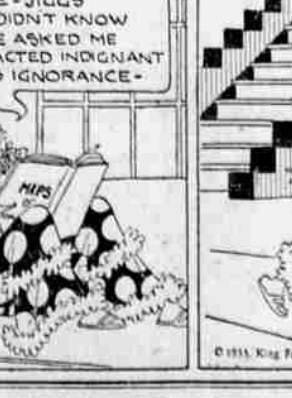
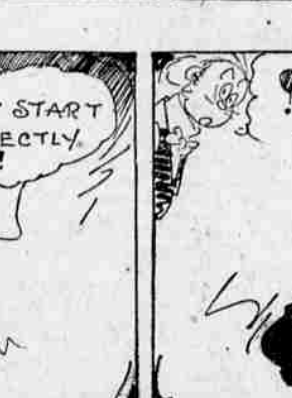
S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



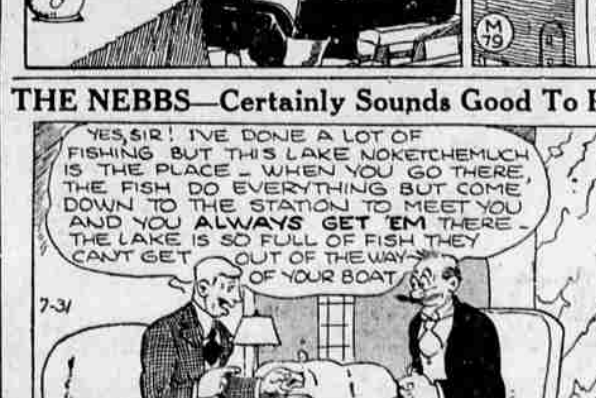
SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Old Man Opportunity!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—The Town Meeting

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Certainly Sounds Good To Rudy

By SOL HESS



WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS—WHAT LAKE IT IS ON?

BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



NOW I'LL GO AND GIVE HIM THE ANSWER—I MUST STILL ACT INGNANT.

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There's No Guesswork in Tribune A. B. C. Circulation