

The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

SYNOPSIS: Colin Hewitt, writer of detective fiction, has plunged himself into one of his own plots. Before Reddy Turner was killed by the Mask, underworld czar, in Colin's apartment, Colin promised Reddy to deliver a mysterious letter to the Mask's killer in Reddy's room when he went for the letter, but escaped. He reads the note accompanying the letter, he is to deliver, and learns that the sealed envelope is to be given to Joe Lazarre, who lives on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence near a town called Cap à l'Orage. Lazarre is an employee of the Mask, so the letter must be delivered secretly. Colin decides to leave at once, partly to evade the Mask, who is on his trail.

Chapter 11 UNDER COVER

THE winch clattered. A boxed radio came up from the Bonaventure's hold and was swung out into the snub-nosed, broad-beamed power boat that thumped against the steamer's hull, and that was already loaded, one might imagine, beyond the capacity of even two of her kind.

And yet, it seemed, there was always room for something more—another barrel or two of flour, another drum of gasoline or oil, a bale of this or a case of that.

Lastly there would be the mail bag. But the mail bag was not usually either bulky or heavy. It generally seemed to have an emaciated and dejected look about it as though conscious of its poverty-stricken state would not even enable it to fold out so much as a letter apiece to that little cluster of houses on the shore there.

Colin, leaning over the coastal steamer's rail, watched the scene as he had watched a similar one many times before, always with unflagging interest.

His mind harked back over the four days and a half since he had left Quebec. Not that a great distance in actual mileage had been covered, as the time consumed might imply; but there had been innumerable stops like this one, for the Bonaventure was the liaison between the lone villages on the coast and the source of supplies and necessities which came from Montreal and Quebec.

He nodded thoughtfully to himself. He had gone ashore frequently, walked through the villages, talked with the people, and had come to admire them for their courage, their faith, and their simple philosophy of life under conditions that were so often those of obvious hardship—and in his heart to pity them for, what seemed to him, their profound loneliness and isolation. A queer, strange, new country to him, so near to civilization, and yet so immeasurably far away! It was—

The boat alongside, fair down to her gunwales, cast off. A figure in the bow, nondescript in dress, one arm wrapped around the plunging mast, waved his cap and shouted in farewell; another figure in the stern, nursing his sputtering engine and half hidden by the heterogeneous pile of cargo that surrounded him, did the same. There came a short, barked order from the bridge. The Bonaventure was on her way again.

And the next port of call was Cap à l'Orage.

A few hours from now—this afternoon. Colin swung away from the rail and began to pace up and down the deck. Cap à l'Orage—Storm Cape. He had wondered often enough if there were anything significant in the name—for him?

On the face of it, it all looked simple enough—to deliver a letter to one known as Joe Lazarre at Cap à l'Orage, that was all. But it wasn't all. Granting the delivery of the letter—what then? What was he, Colin, to do? Go back to New York, take up his normal life again?

It wouldn't last very long! The Mask, as witness Reddy's end, did not delay attentions of that sort unduly. As it stood now, Colin Hewitt, so far as the Mask was concerned, had—well, vanished. He had left no trace behind him, no trail to follow; he was confident of that. And to make assurance doubly sure, he was no longer even the "Routh" of the hotel register. His name now was Howard—Donald Howard. He smiled wryly. How many names had the Mask? He was running the Mask a close second!

All very well! But to resume his life as Colin Hewitt in New York as matters now stood? Merely suicide! What to do, then? So much depended on Lazarre—on Lazarre's attitude. What was in that letter? Why had Reddy laid so much stress upon it? What would Lazarre do?

Reddy had stated that Lazarre was working for the Mask—and believed that the Mask had "inter-

ests" of some sort on the coast here. Had there been something between Reddy and Lazarre that would cause the latter to swear to his allegiance to the Mask due to Reddy's murder? If so, that seemed to indicate the way out for him, Colin—a clue to the Mask's identity through Lazarre, though at the same time being careful to protect Lazarre. That latter, as a rider, was prominently embodied in his, Colin's, promise to Reddy.

But if, through Lazarre, he could get a clue to the Mask's identity! A savage lust welled up in Colin's soul. There was a heavy score to settle. He had seen Reddy shot down as casually as one might swat a fly on a window pane, and his own world was shattered, his own life dependent now on matching his wits to win against the Mask. What a story it would have made! He would have gloried in it. But, damn it, this was no story—it was stark actuality!

Well, his solution, so far as that end of the problem was involved, seemed to have worked out satisfactorily up to now. He was here on a bit of a holiday, that was all—wanted to see something of the north coast, and, later, Labrador, and later still, Newfoundland perhaps. Where the spirit led. Some salmon-fishing, too, though he understood that most of the rivers were privately owned—but that could be had anyway in Newfoundland.

He had merely elected to make Cap à l'Orage his first stop because he had been informed that was one of the few places well down on the coast where anything in the way of boarding-house or hotel accommodation was to be obtained. A good reason!

And, from what he had seen in his jaunts ashore, he mentally congratulated himself that Reddy had indicated Cap à l'Orage as a starting point—no matter how primitive the accommodation there might prove to be!

ALL this was perfectly logical, perfectly natural. He alone at moments had thrown side glances at his own story—simply because, of course, he alone knew that he had something to conceal. As a matter of fact no one had dreamed of questioning his story. He had unhesitatingly been accepted at his own face value.

His glance traveled up and down the dock—a composite picture—the tourists making a holiday cruise to Newfoundland and back; pulp men and timber cruisers bound for various points; the casual passengers, local inhabitants mostly, and whole families of these sometimes, that kept getting on and off, paying visits or perhaps migrating from one place to another.

A queer potpourri! The rough-and-ready rubbing shoulders with the more immaculately groomed in hearty camaraderie. He knew almost everyone on board. The lack of restraint had been delightful. There were always tales of the early days on the coast by the oldtimers. Sometimes in English, sometimes in French.

And always there were eager listeners. Excursions ashore when the Bonaventure was discharging for an hour or more; a laughing, drenched party often enough when there was no what and there was a bit of a sea on. A jolly, carefree crowd. A vague smile crossed his lips. He was the only one on board, bent on tracking down a murderer!

Oh, yes! He had fitted into his own little niche perfectly. He had no doubt of that. In one particular perhaps too perfectly! He was Mr. Howard—Mr. Donald Howard, a broker from Boston. There were moments when he infinitely preferred his own name—not for any egotistical reason!

Her deck chair was unoccupied. Had been for the last hour. Perhaps she had gone below to pack. Perhaps he would better do the same. In a few hours the Bonaventure would dock at Cap à l'Orage. The purser had told him they were the only two leaving the ship there. She, like everyone else, had accepted him at face value. Well, did he wish she hadn't? Damn!

He went down to his cabin, grinned not humorously at the blatant assortment of fishing paraphernalia he had acquired—and would probably never use—and then proceeded to pack his bags.

But as his hands worked, so did his mind. Germaine Tremblay, Mademoiselle Germaine Tremblay, Germaine. Well, what about her? What did he know about her? It was surprising what he knew about her!

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Colin talks, tomorrow, with an important young person.

WALLACE URGES DEBT ADJUSTING

STONEVILLE, Miss., Aug. 9.—(AP)—Adjustment of foreign war debts

to stimulate export trade in farm products was advocated here today by Henry A. Wallace, secretary of agriculture, before a mass meeting of Mississippi delta farmers.

"If we want to sell farm products abroad in somewhat near the old quantities, then we shall have to change our minds about the debts," Secretary Wallace said. "If we are

going to insist on payment of the debts, we shall have to abandon all hope of a healthy export trade in farm products for a long time to come."

Broken windows glazed by Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

Auto glass, plate and shatter-proof, Brill Metal Works.

DESERTED WIFE SLAYS CHILDREN

ELECTRA, Texas, Aug. 9.—(AP)—Deserted by her husband and finding

"nothing for us but death," Mrs. J. H. Gordon, 32, last night cut the throats of her two children, Wynell, 8, and Ellen Beth, 9, and then killed herself with the same razor. Mrs. L. C. Johns, a neighbor, found the bodies today.

A note Mrs. Gordon had written to her husband said: "I know of nothing for us but death. I love you dearly. Myrtle."

ROOSEVELT DISCUSSES MONETARY PROBLEM

HYDE PARK, N. Y., Aug. 9.—(AP) President Roosevelt discussed the domestic and international monetary problem in a significant conference today with his experts, but the meeting was officially described as unrelated either to stabilization of the dollar or inflation.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



DIVERSION

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—No Visitors!



BOUND TO WIN—The Verdict In Advance!



THE NEBBS—What—No Fish?



BRINGING UP FATHER



MEDFORD MENTIONED IN SCIENCE MONITOR

Medford received publicity in the August 1st edition of the Christian Science Monitor. It was announced by chamber of commerce officials today. A box on page 3 headed "Oregon Groups Save Science Timber Land" contained a story of the effort which the Medford Chamber of Commerce has put forward to preserve the forests lining the Crater Lake National Park Highway.

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