

The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

SYNOPSIS: Colin Hewitt, who now calls himself Donald Howard as part of the scheme he has adopted to evade the Mask, New York underworld killer, packs his effects in his cabin on the *Snowstorm*, preparing to land at Cap à l'Orange, remote settlement on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The Mask killed Colin's friend Reddy Turner, but not before Reddy had pleaded Colin to deliver a letter to Joe Lazarre, who lives near Cap à l'Orange and presumably is employed by the Mask himself. The Mask is said to have "interests" nearby. But as he notes, Colin (who is a writer of detective fiction) thinks of Germaine Tremblay.

Chapter 13

GERMAINE TREMBLAY

THE captain, Captain Rainville, had introduced her to him the second day out. "Mademoiselle Germaine Tremblay"—the captain had lingered over the name affectionately. "You have only to be down here but a very little while, Mr. Howard, and you know what the name of Tremblay means on the coast."

She had flushed prettily. "Captain Rainville is always like that!" she had protested. "Don't you believe a word he says. He is a great tease." But Captain Rainville, who had himself been born on the coast and knew everybody, had been even conservative in what he had said. Those of the coast who were aboard had treated her with the utmost deference; and Colin heard much about the fame of the Tremblays and their connection with the north shore.

They had been amongst the earliest settlers, the first Tremblay coming originally from France. Several generations. Prospering. Open-handed. Respected. In short, the story of the Tremblays was the story of the north shore—and vice versa.

Colin frowned over his packing. Her father was Dr. Louis Tremblay of Cap à l'Orange, the present head of the family. He had married an English girl. A romance begun in his college days in Montreal. But his wife was now dead. There was only a daughter and a son left. The son, following in his father's footsteps, had graduated in medicine in Montreal, and was now taking a special course in New York. Germaine—Mademoiselle Tremblay—was returning from a visit to some friends in Quebec.

Marvelous hair—like burnished gold where the sun glistened on it. She inherited that from her mother, too, probably. Someone had said she could drive a dog team with the best of them—and yet she was scarcely up to his shoulder.

Colin went up on deck. Her chair was still unoccupied. He hung himself into his own chair and tugged a book out of his pocket. For some unaccountable reason he did not feel like talking to anybody—not even to François Jolicoeur, the old timber cruiser over there, who told entrancing tales of the coast and his own adventures—alas, not always true! A priceless old liar! A great character for a book written around these parts! A book? What book? Would he, Colin, ever write another? He had his own skin now, to put it bluntly, to think of first.

Somewhere a winch suddenly spluttered and clanked—noisily, discordantly. They were getting cargo up on deck. A sure sign that another port was near at hand. Cap à l'Orange. He looked up.

She had just emerged from the captain's room up there of the lower bridge, the captain following her through the doorway. Colin heard her laugh ring out as she gayly spurned the captain's offer of assistance, and came lithely down the ladder.

How would he describe her if he were introducing her as a heroine to his readers? He wasn't much good when it came to his "girl" stuff—never had been. Always afraid of it. But he wasn't describing her now in a lame and groping paragraph as he rose from his chair to meet her and they automatically drifted over to the rail together—he was just looking at her.

The blue eyes smiled at him frankly out of a face whose only cosmetics were the sun and the out-of-doors.

"I thought you'd gone down to pack," he said.

"Oh, no," she laughed, "I did that before lunch, except of course, just the few finishing touches. And you?"

"All set," he answered.

"Captain Rainville chased me away." She waved her hand shoreward.

"We'll be in shortly. That's Cap à l'Orange over there. See that bald old mountain sticking out into the water with a lighthouse on top of it? The town is just this side of it!"

In that little bay. You can begin to see the houses now."

"I see." He nodded. "Storm Cape. I've always meant to ask how it came by its name."

Studying her, he saw the smile fade from her eyes as she shook her head gravely.

"I am afraid it has earned it," she said seriously. "I can't explain it. Of course, the Gulf is very wide here, like the open sea, and you can't see the other shore; but then that's true in lots of other places. But the storms do seem to center here and at times are very violent."

"Besides, though the Gulf is famous for its fogs, we seem to get more than our share of those too—and so often they come upon us almost without any warning at all. The storms are really very treacherous, and there is scarcely a year goes by that one of our men is never heard of again. And another's sorrow in a little place like ours, you know, is one's own too."

He nodded his head.

"I can well appreciate that," he said quietly. "And so that's how it came by its name, is it?"

She nodded her head in turn; and then her mood changed swiftly and she was smiling at him again—half teasingly, and yet half in earnest, too, it seemed.

"Do you know," she said, "that I've really been worrying a lot about you ever since I knew you were getting off at Cap à l'Orange?"

He fell in with her mood.

"How awful!" he exclaimed tragically.

"No, really!" she returned quickly. "Madame Frézier does the best she can with her so-called 'hotel,' but it is far from being a modern hostelry and far, I am afraid, from what you will expect. It's mostly post office and general store. You know, we are supposed to be hospitable here on the coast, and I am sure father would take you completely under his wing, only—her face clouded suddenly—"I don't think he's very well."

"That's what has brought me back a little sooner than I had expected. But, in any case, I promise you that you won't be utterly deserted... if you like an occasional tramp through the woods... and I've got a rather jolly little motorboat, not terribly swanky, but a brave little craft just the same."

"Glorious!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "As for the rest, I am sure that Madame Frézier and I will get along famously. And besides—"

He studied her for a moment. His thoughts raced suddenly. Why not? He couldn't go around everywhere asking for Joe Lazarre! This was the obvious, the natural, the least suspicious move to make. He didn't like that—with her! But what could he do?

"And besides," he went on, "I'm not sure that I am going to be wholly a stranger in a strange land. A friend of a friend of mine! He laughed a little. "You know! I believe he's down here at Cap à l'Orange. His name is Lazarre. Joe—short for Joseph, of course."

"Lazarre?" she repeated, and shook her head. "It's not an uncommon name by any means, but I am sure I know everyone in Cap à l'Orange, and there is no one by that name in the village."

Colin dug for a cigarette and lighted it. Lazarre wasn't the man's real name, of course. Everybody in the whole business seemed to indulge in fictitious names—himself included! But Reddy had said that it was as Lazarre the man was known here. Not so easy, apparently, from what she had just said, to pick up the trail! And yet he had scarcely expected to find the man a resident of Cap à l'Orange. Reddy's uncertainty as to Lazarre's exact whereabouts had suggested a decided question mark in that regard. But someone in Cap à l'Orange must have seen or heard of Joe Lazarre.

"Oh, well," he said lightly, "it really doesn't matter."

"Wait!" she cried out impulsively.

He waited. He liked the dainty way in which her brow was suddenly profoundly puckered.

"Of course!" she said. "I hadn't thought of that! If he's a friend of a friend of yours, and moving in exalted social circles—she was a little witch—she made him a staid bar—perhaps he's one of the men who come down every year to the club."

"The club?" he echoed. "Then there is a club at Cap à l'Orange?"

Colin stumbled across the trail of an old acquaintance, Monday.

SALEM, Aug. 10.—(AP)—Freedom and evasion have terminated for Douglas L. Day who escaped from the Oregon state penitentiary July 29, 1930. He was apprehended at Los Angeles, Calif., and will be returned to serve out his term of 12 years for assault while armed with a dangerous weapon.

PENDLETON Warns Up.

PENDLETON, Ore., Aug. 9.—(AP)—A maximum temperature of 102 degrees was reached here Tuesday, after a period of comparatively cool weather. The higher temperature has enabled ranchers to resume harvesting after a three-day halt caused by rain.

SEEK FEE FOR USE NEVADA HIGHWAYS

LAS VEGAS, Nev., Aug. 10.—(AP)—Fifty new passenger automobiles

towed overland and consigned to Paul G. Hoffman, Los Angeles dealer, were held here last night by traffic officers of the public service commission on the demand that each machine be licensed under Nevada laws.

The cars were from a South Bend, Indiana, factory. The licenses, with contingent expenses, including the

property tax in this state, would cost \$65 each.

Detention of the cars here was described by the state officers as the first step in a campaign against persons using Nevada highways for commercial purposes without being properly licensed.

Real estate or insurance—leave it to Jones. Phone 696.

ROAD CREW JOINS IN WEDDING RITES

GRANTS PASS, Aug. 10.—(AP)—Wedding of a road worker and a

Roseburg girl was celebrated at Laurel camp on the Pacific highway north of here last night in festivities for which the entire camp was taken over and in which all of the 33-man road crew joined.

Stopping the bridegroom's escape by disabling his car and changing his plans to have the wedding elsewhere, his companions of the crew secured Rev. Howard of Glendale and the

ceremony was performed in the camp dining room with a dance following, and the entire shift of the camp was back at work at 4 o'clock this morning, the bridegroom with them.

Lila Olson of Roseburg was the bride and Harrison Rice of Dillard the groom.

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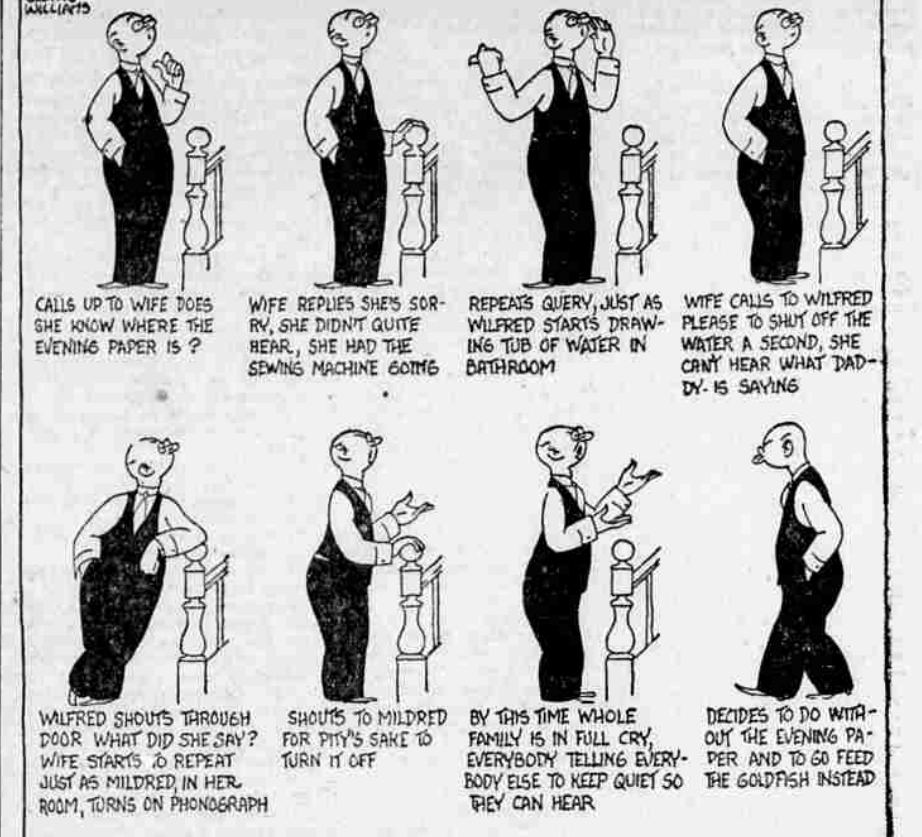
S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



THE FAMILY ALBUM—THE EVENING PAPER

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—New Storm Center Over Tortuga!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—Ben's Worst Fear

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Poor Butterfly

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



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