

# MURDER AT MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

Chapter 50  
DESPERATE WOMAN

Harper was asking himself how it was possible that this modish beauty could be thrice a murderer—Alma Croymen was asking herself how much of her story this Sergeant of Detectives had guessed.

"I have been eavesdropping, Mr. Harper," she announced simply, as one who puts Q. E. D. at the end of a demonstration in geometry.

Harper relaxed, the tension easing from muscles instinctively braced against the possible impact of flying steel. The woman was sane and collected, at all events. But her right hand was still invisible, and there was no sign of wavering in the set lines of her mouth or the look in her eyes.

Alma Croymen noticed this furtive lapse of attention. "Please don't try anything heroic," she spoke through tight lips. "Sit down—over there."

Harper, with an air of casualness, took the chair she indicated. "This is very dramatic, but quite useless, you know," he objected.

Her eyes burned at him, suddenly alive. "I had to be sure." She shivered a little. "As soon as I saw your face—"

The detective leaned forward. "Mrs. Croymen, let us talk this situation over quietly between ourselves. Gun-waving is out of place at this stage. There must have been some terrible driving power that forced you to such lengths. Only you can state what that was. Joseph Donaghy's part in it I can guess, but the other—"

"I did not come here to talk. I felt you getting closer and closer to the solution, and I had to see if you really knew. You forced my hand by going after my sister and I fear. They have nothing to do with this matter, and at least I can have the final decency to shoulder my own burdens. And for your own safety let me repeat your warning to Joseph Donaghy—you can hang a person only once. Remember that and act accordingly. . . . Have you a gun in your pocket?"

Harper shook his head. "I carry one only on special occasions. You may search me if you like," he added, half rising from the chair.

"Sit still! If you move or make a noise I'll shoot!" There was no mistaking the steely ring of that voice.

"Come, now," Harper protested. "Even if I had a gun in my pocket I wouldn't try to beat you to the draw. That isn't necessary. You can bluff me, Mrs. Croymen. You're the one in the dangerous spot, and you can't shoot your way out of it this time. My advice is to give in gracefully."

"I shall escape," she replied confidently. "Do you suppose I would plan everything else and not arrange for that? Everything is ready."

Harper shook his head again. "You can't get away. If you shoot at me you'll not get out of this room. And suppose you did escape temporarily? Where could you go? To whom could you turn?"

"The full machinery of the law would be turned to tracking you down. You would be a marked woman wherever you went. You couldn't even find a refuge in the lowest slums or the underworld. They'd give you up in a minute. At most, a few days of terror and flight, and you'd be run down like a rabbit hunted by dogs."

"Well, I don't argue that point." The masklike face turned to him, with its set lines, the shadows under sleepless eyes. "Tell me, how did you know?"

The detective silently pointed to the lens on the table.

Mrs. Croymen gave a swift glance. "I don't understand. What were you looking at?"

"That's a professional secret, Mrs. Croymen. Suppose you use the lens for yourself?"

"I would like to, but I can't trust you. Tell me, please." Her voice suddenly broke in quick pleading. "Nothing can matter now!"

The detective thought, if I can keep on talking long enough some one will try that door. When that happens I'll close in and take my chances with her gun.

He said aloud, "When you came in I had just made an important discovery. We had failed before to find any fingerprints on that table, but I just noticed a number of tiny marks on the top, and they furnish a clue

nearly as distinctive as a fingerprint itself."

He spoke deliberately, "Some one struck the top of that table four or five times with a clenched fist. That suggests a quarrel or an argument. The marks were made by that ring you are wearing, Mrs. Croymen. The diagonal setting of those two diamonds makes an unmistakable pattern. That gave it away."

The woman digested this in silence. She looked at the ring on her finger, then, standing at the table, made the motion of phantom anger, rapping with knuckles down. "Such a small thing," she murmured.

"Great results are often measured by small devices," the detective answered.

She looked at the ring again. "Otherwise, you would not have known?" she questioned.

"I wouldn't say that," Harper replied. "It really would have been more baffling to us if Donaghy's death had appeared in its true colors."

"Camouflaging it as suicide really broke up the puzzle. It was there that your logic tripped itself up, for in order to pin the whole thing on the supposed suicide through his confession, you had to give away the secret of that first escape. A fatal error, for it prompted me to look for the same clue in the second instance."

"The same clue?" she repeated.

"Yes—the same clue. No matter how clever the deed, there is always an unsuspected clue left behind. Sometimes we are not alert enough to find it." He waved toward the table. "Those diamond marks are an instance. But the clue I referred to was a peculiar cut in the snow which was made when the rope was shaken free and hauled back.

"We found that mark in the beginning, but could make nothing of it. It was only when we were put in possession of the rope itself that its meaning became clear. Naturally, this led me to look in the snow again after we found Donaghy, and there was the same kind of mark.

"That labeled it at once as another murder, in spite of the typed confession, the nature of the wound and the recovered articles. That ingenious excuse for the absence of the blackmail money Donaghy had was suspicious, too, for we know he had not been away from his room last night."

"Thanks for the advice," she drew herself together, slowly pulled the ring from her finger, and deliberately placed it on the table. "This has betrayed me once. It would be dangerous to wear it one longer, wouldn't it? See that it gets back safely to my husband," she said steadily, "and tell him I'm sorry for all the trouble I've caused."

"But, Mrs. Croymen, you can't go away like this, simply saying nothing in your own defense. There must be reasons, explanations, you can give. You owe it to yourself to present your side of the story. Surely Officer Hamill has done nothing to warrant his death?"

Alma Croymen winced from that name as from a blow. "That is the real burden on my conscience," she whispered. "I lost my head—I went crazy—I saw the whole perfect plan I had designed destroyed by that one blind chance. That was murder, but those other two," she flashed with sudden anger blazing in her shadowed eyes, "that was only justice. I have not a single regret. I had to use what weapons I could against them."

Harper lowered his voice. "Mrs. Croymen, who was H. D. really?"

"Neither you, nor any one, shall ever know that," she answered bitterly. "Let him lie in the Morgue, let him go to a Potter's Field. I'll never tell. It's the best he deserves. No one will ever come forward to claim him, alive or dead!"

"I am not prying, I'm merely trying to understand your story, Mrs. Croymen," Sergeant Harper said with simple dignity.

"Then I'll help you to understand," she flamed. "I have never been happy in my marriage. It is true that I had an affair with that man. As I look back now, I hardly know how it began, except that I met him at a time when I was unhappy and started for excitement." She stopped, staring blankly at the detective. "I soon found I had fallen into the hands of a beast. I came to hate him. I tried to break away."

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The case, tomorrow, takes a startling turn.

Use Mail Tribune want ads.

Illinois Grows Chinese Cabbage  
URBANA, Ill. (AP)—Sauerkraut made from Chinese cabbage is to be a new delicacy in meals served to 45,879 inmates in charitable and penal institutions of Illinois.

Chinese cabbage thrives under certain fall weather conditions in the state that prove harmful to the ordinary cabbage crop.

City May Be 'Leased'  
SACRAMENTO, Cal. (AP)—In gold rush days, the mining town of Columbia came within one vote in the legislature of being named the capital of California. Recently it was revealed by Attorney General U. A. Webb that the state may lease the ghost city for \$1 a year as a historical site.

# CELEBRATION AT GRANTS PASS TO INCLUDE VARIETY

A full day isn't exactly the Fourth term to be applied to the Fourth of July celebration in Grants Pass. The events of the day are more like a three-ring circus—while you are looking at one thing you miss something else. But all are not interested in the same performance and Morris Martin, with his efficient committee-men, has thought of everybody and everything and arranged a program so nobody will go home disappointed.

All can witness the arrival of the Klitte band at 6 in the morning and follow it up and down Sixth street, listening to the strains of the bagpipes.

At 9:30 there will be no other amusements to detract from the street sports—jumping, climbing a greased pole, potato sack and three-legged races, bicycle races, fat men's races, etc., and not forgetting the water fight between the two fire companies.

Then comes the parade with its bodies of marching units, horseback riders, beautifully decorated bicycles, magnificent floats, the Cavemen with retiring Queen Vivienne, Queen-elect Catherine and the five princesses, the educational display by the forestry department, the unique 40 at 8, bands, drum corps and clowns.

Then to the park where there are tables, shade and seats for the picnic dinner—one of the things eagerly anticipated by all. The speech by

Colonel Tandy, also the ceremony of crowning the Cavemen's queen, will probably come before the numbers on the program begin to overlap, after which you will have to choose what you would rather see. Water sports from 1 to 3 at the beach in the park; ball game between Grants Pass and Medford at the fair grounds at 2:30. Immediately following the ball game the wrestling match between Ape-Man Cox and Bob Kruse, also to be staged at the fair grounds.

In the meantime those not interested in this type of sport may return to Sixth street where there will be music for street dancing for all who care to participate; and on the vacant lot between the Chamber of Commerce building and the Southern Pacific depot a rock, drilling contest will be staged by experienced miners of southern Oregon.

At 9 o'clock there is nothing to divert attention from the magnificent display of fireworks, followed by the two dances (once more a choice between the two—old fashioned and modern—is necessary).

Agricultural extension workers of the North Carolina state government are conducting a campaign designed to induce all farmers to keep business records.

LOOKIT ALL THE GOOD SLEEP I'M MISSING



# SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

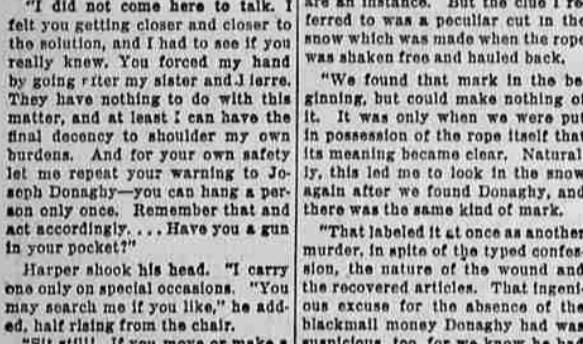
By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



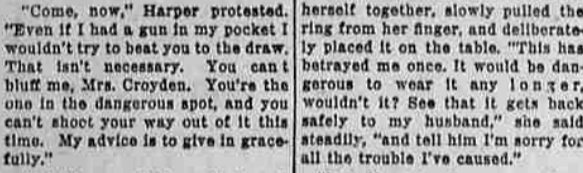
FRED PERLEY GOT MAD WHEN HE COULDN'T GET TO SLEEP BECAUSE SOME ONE WAS PARKED ACROSS THE STREET WITH THE ENGINE RUNNING, AND HE RAN OUT AND SWITCHED OFF THE IGNITION BEFORE HE REALIZED IT WAS THE POLICE CAR INVESTIGATING ONE OF MRS. LAPPET'S USUAL BURGLAR ALARMS.

(Copyright, 1934, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

# S'MATTER POP—



THAT'S JUST A SAYING! NO ONE EVER SAW IT RAIN CATS AN' DOGS!



"I did not come here to talk. I felt you getting closer and closer to the solution, and I had to see if you really knew. You forced my hand by going after my sister and I fear. They have nothing to do with this matter, and at least I can have the final decency to shoulder my own burdens. And for your own safety let me repeat your warning to Joseph Donaghy—you can hang a person only once. Remember that and act accordingly. . . . Have you a gun in your pocket?"

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# TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Disagreement!



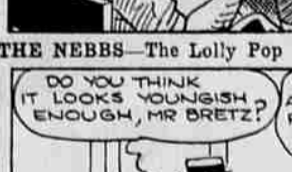
NOW, LOUIE, WE'VE SPENT A LOT OF MONEY SO FAR ON MIDNIGHT PATROL—WHY HANG THE WHOLE PICTURE BY RESORTING TO MINIATURE PROCESS ON THE GRAND FINALE?



I HAVE TOLD YOU ALREADY ADVENTURE PICTURES CORPORATION IS FACING RECEIVERSHIP BECAUSE OF THIS MIDNIGHT PATROLLER EXTRAVAGANZA—WE GOT TO CUT EXPENSES!



PAUL—YOU'VE GONE THROUGH THE REAL THING IN FRANCE—YOU'RE THE TECHNICAL DIRECTOR OF THIS PICTURE—WHAT DO YOU THINK?



AND DON'T FORGET THE KIDS—THE EMBRYONIC FLYERS OF TOMORROW—IF YOU THINK YOU CAN FOX THEM, YOU'RE GOOD...



A MINIATURE WOULD COST HALF AS MUCH—WHY SHOULD I PAY DOUBLE?



WHILE YOU'RE CUTTING EXPENSES, LOUIE, JUST CUT ME OFF YOUR PAY ROLL—I'M THROUGH, UNLESS I CAN MAKE THIS PICTURE THE WAY IT SHOULD BE MADE!

# BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Full Report



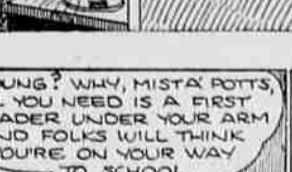
THE SHIP LOOKS EXACTLY AS SHE DID IN THE PICTURES TAKEN BY MR. JEPPOARD—OF COURSE, THERE'S SOME CORAL GROWTH AROUND THE HULL NOW, BUT—



—SHE'S IN MIGHTY SOUND CONDITION FOR HAVING BEEN SUBMERGED SO LONG—IT'S AS PRETTY A JOB FOR A DIVING OPERATION AS I'VE SEEN IN A LONG TIME—THE DEPTH IS ONLY ABOUT SIXTY FEET AND THAT'S A CINCH—



SAY, DAVE, YOU DIDN'T PASS ANY O' THEM OCTOPOUSSIES COMIN' UP OR GOIN' DOWN, DID YOU?



NARY A ONE, LUKE—



NOW, BEN, REMEMBER I JUST TOOK TIME TO GIVE THE SHIP A QUICK ONCE-OVER—I'LL LEARN MORE TOMORROW—



AND I'LL GO DOWN WITH YOU!

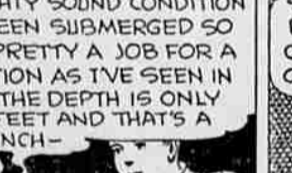
# THE NEBBES—The Lolly Pop



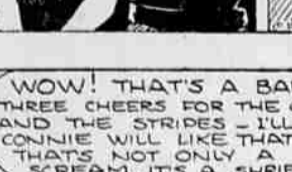
DO YOU THINK IT LOOKS YOUNGISH ENOUGH, MR BRETZ?



YOUNG? WHY, MISTA ROTTS, ALL YOU NEED IS A FIRST READER UNDER YOUR ARM AND FOLKS WILL THINK YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY TO SCHOOL.



WOW! THAT'S A BABY! THREE CHEERS FOR THE CHECKS AND THE STRIPES—I'LL BET CONNIE WILL LIKE THAT OUTFIT. THAT'S NOT ONLY A SCREAM, IT'S A SHRIEK!



WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH IT? DOES IT MAKE ME LOOK TOO YOUNGISH?



YOUNGISH! YOU OUGHT TO PUT YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS IN YOUR POCKET BECAUSE IF YOU GET LOST THE POLICE WILL TAKE YOU TO THE FOUNDINGS' HOME.

# BRINGING UP FATHER



OH, YOU MUST STAY FOR TEA—WANT TO HAVE A LONG CHAT WITH YOU.



OH, BUT I CAN'T YOU SEE, I DIDN'T BRING MY BAG—I MUST HAVE TO GO HOME ON THE STREET-CAR AND IT IS SUCH A LONG RIDE.



OH, DON'T WORRY, LOTTIE—I'LL ASK DADDY TO DRIVE YOU HOME.



OH, HELLO, MERRY—I'M GLAD YOU CAME HOME.

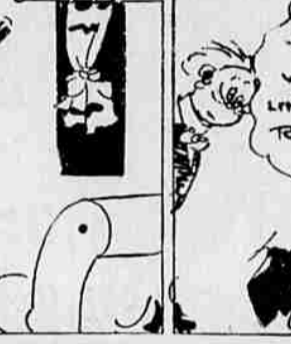


HELLO, SIS, WELL, IF IT ISN'T MISS LOTTIE NURVE—TOO, I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.



HELLO DAD, I'LL BE USING THE CAR A LITTLE LATER AS I MUST TAKE MISS LOTTIE NURVE HOME.

# QUALITY GUM



WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT GUM THE PERFECT GUM 5c AND WORTH IT!

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