

# THE BOOMERANG CLUE

BY AGATHA CHRISTIE

CHAPTER 12  
DEDUCTION

ACCORDING to our present theory it goes like this," Bobby continued. "Dead man X is deliberately pushed over cliff—presumably by B. F. (pardon the initials). It is important that X should not be correctly identified, so the portrait of Mrs. C. is put in his pocket and the portrait of Fair Unknown removed. Who was she, I wonder?"

"Keep to the point," said Frankie sternly. "Mrs. C. waits for photograph to appear. Then turns up as a grief-stricken sister and identifies X as her brother from foreign parts."

"You don't believe he could really have been her brother?" "Not for a moment! You know, it puzzled me all along. The Caymans were a different class altogether. The dead man was—well, it sounds a most awful thing to say and just like some deadly old retired Anglo-Indian—but the dead man was a pukka sahib."

"And the Caymans emphatically weren't?" "Most emphatically." "And then, just when everything has gone off well from the Caymans' point of view—body successfully identified, verdict of accidental death, everything in the garden lovely—you come along and mess things up," mused Frankie.

"Why didn't they ask Evans?" Bobby repeated the phrase thoughtfully. "You know I can't see what on earth there can be in that to put the wind up anybody."

"Ah! that's because you don't know. It's like making crossword puzzles. You write down a clue and you think it's too idiotically simple and that everyone will guess it straight off, and you're frightfully surprised when they simply can't get it in the least. Why didn't they ask Evans? must have been a most frightfully significant phrase to them, and they couldn't realize that it meant nothing at all to you."

"More tools they?" "Oh, quite so. But it's just possible they thought that if Pritchard said that, he might have said something more which would also recur to you in due time. Anyway they weren't going to take chances. You were safer out of the way."

"They took a lot of risk. Why didn't they engineer another 'accident'?" "No, no. That would have been stupid. Two accidents within a week of each other? It might have suggested a connection between the two, and then people would have begun inquiring into the first one. No, I think there's a kind of bad simplicity about their method which is really rather clever."

"And yet you said just now that morphia wasn't easy to get hold of?" "No more it is. You have to sign poison books and things. Oh—of course, that's a clue! Whoever did it had easy access to supplies of morphia."

"A doctor, a hospital nurse, or a chemist," suggested Bobby. "Well, I was thinking more of illicitly imported drugs."

"You can't mix up too many different sorts of crime," said Bobby. "You see, the strong point would be the absence of motive. Your death doesn't benefit anyone. So what will the police think?"

"A lunatic," said Bobby. "And that's what they do think." "You see? It's awfully simple really."

He must be all clear and above-board. Not only must there be nothing to connect him in any way with the dead man, but he must have a proper reason for being down here. He may have invented house-hunting on the spur of the moment, but I bet he carried out something of the kind. There must be no suggestion of a 'mysterious stranger' seen in the neighborhood of the accident. I fancy that Bassington French is his real name, and that he's the sort of person who would be quite above suspicion."

"Yes," said Frankie thoughtfully. "That's a very good deduction. There will be nothing whatever to connect Bassington-French with Alex Pritchard. Now if we knew who the dead man really was—"

"Ah! then it might be different." "So it was very important that the body should not be recognized. Hence all the Cayman camouflage. And yet it was taking a big risk."

"You forget that Mrs. Cayman identified him as soon as was humanly possible. After that, even if there had been pictures of him in the papers (you know how blurry these things are) people would only say 'Curious, this man Pritchard who fell over a cliff is really extraordinarily like Mr. X.'"

"There must be more to it than that," said Frankie shrewdly. "X must have been a man who wouldn't easily be missed. I mean, he couldn't have been the sort of family man whose wife or relations would go to the police at once and report him missing."

"Good for you, Frankie. No, he must have been just going abroad, or perhaps just come back (he was marvellously tanned, like a big-game hunter—he looked that sort of person), and he can't have had any very near relations who knew all about his movements."

"We're deducing beautifully," said Frankie. "I hope we're not deducing all wrong." "Very likely," said Bobby. "But I think what we've said so far is fairly sound sense—granted, that is, the wild improbability of the whole thing."

Frankie waved away the wild improbability with an airy gesture. "The thing is—what to do next?" she said. "It seems to me we've got three angles of attack."

"Go on, Sherlock." "The first is you. They've made one attempt on your life. They'll probably try again. This time we might get what they call a 'line' on them. Using you as a decoy, I mean."

"No, thank you, Frankie," said Bobby with feeling. "I've been very lucky this time, but I mightn't be so lucky again if they changed the attack to a blunt instrument. I was thinking of taking a great deal of care of myself in the future. The decoy idea can be washed out."

"I was afraid you'd say that," said Frankie with a sigh. "Young men are sadly degenerate nowadays. As father says so. They don't enjoy being uncomfortable and doing dangerous and unpleasant things any longer. It's a pity."

"A great pity," said Bobby, but he spoke with firmness. "What's the second plan of campaign?"

"Working from the 'Why didn't they ask Evans?' clue," said Frankie. "Presumably the dead man came down here to see Evans— whoever he was. Now, if we could find Evans—"

## STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



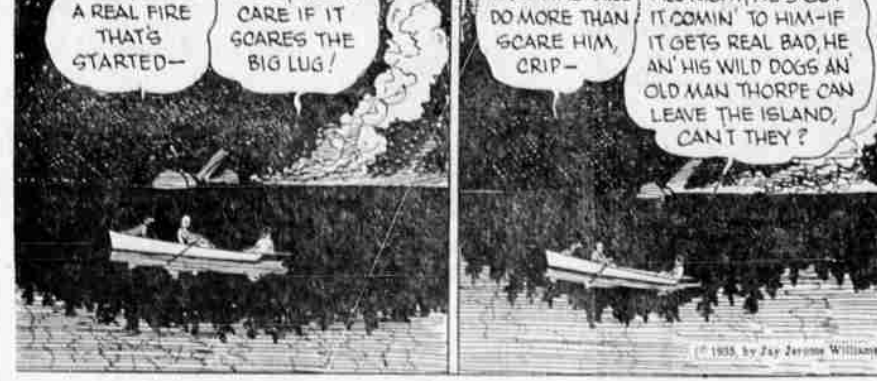
Strange as it seems, the Lapps have heavy wool socks—but they do not wear them except at night. In the daytime they wear socks made of marsh grass straws, saving their woolen socks for sleeping. It may seem a strange custom to others, but the Lapps say that their grass socks are more protective than fabrics, that they are cheap and available anywhere, and best of all they are warm when wet. Wool socks are better, however, for keeping the feet warm at night.

As far as we can learn from the best records of the travels of Christopher Columbus, that discoverer was never within more than 1000 miles of the South American land that is now Chile, he may have never come closer than 2000 miles of it, and beyond question the now accepted fact that Columbus touched the South American mainland at all. Yet, strange as it seems, Columbus has been honored by Chile in seven out of eight of its early stamp issues.

In the first 82 stamp issues made by the Chilean government, 72 of them bore likeness of Columbus. On the other hand, Colombia was named for Columbus and he is believed to have explored part of that country in 1502—but there only one stamp issue honored the discoverer. Tomorrow: The Pading Star.

YOU HAVE TO TAKE YOUR HAT OFF TO WRIGLEY'S QUALITY

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Pancho Makes a Discovery!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Forest Fire!



THE NEBBS—Oh, Happy Day



## SNOWBALLER

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



SMATTER POP—



## THE DALLES MINT NEVER OPERATED

Few people know that congress once appropriated \$100,000 for a mint in Oregon. That the mint was constructed at The Dalles in 1888 but never coined a dime.

A field worker for the American Guide, WPA writers' project, reports that the building, made of native sand stone, was prepared to take care of the heavy output of the mines in Idaho and the John Day country. At one time the annual output of these mines was estimated at twelve million dollars.

warehouse. Today it stands a block off Second street between Madison and Monroe in The Dalles.

Dahlstrom Hites Held PENSLETON, Ore., Feb. 17.—(AP) Funeral services were held here yesterday for Henry C. Dahlstrom, 44, oil company agent who died here suddenly February 15. He was former chief de gate of the 40 21 3 in Louisville.

SALEM, Feb. 17.—(AP)—A thin layer of sleet and snow covered the ground here this morning, as chill weather continued. The thermometer recorded a minimum reading of 18 degrees Sunday morning and 29 today.

Parents Surprised CHICAGO, Feb. 17.—(AP)—Snappy costumes were worn by suburban Oak Park high school girls in staging their 48th annual revue. Each child invited its parents to a total cost of less than \$1, a new all time low.